SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 502. FOR WEEK ENDING AUGUST 13TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

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SHORT STORIES

No. 502. ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending August 13th, 1898.

The Neglected Grave.

"I DON'T think it is fair," said Sophie, as she gave the pebbles at her feet a vindictive shove.

"I don't either," said Otto, as resolutely. "Old Fritz was a soldier just as much as anybody, wasn't he? A soldier's a soldier, isn't he, even if he does get old and die very poor and ragged?"

"Course he is!" chimed in Herman, stopping a moment in his play. "He went to the war, one of the very first one's, and all through it. I heard father say so."

"And he's buried in the churchyard and among the poor graves," exclaimed Sophie, "and no one takes any notice of him, or decorates his grave, or anything!"

Herman shook his head.

"Well, I don't think it's fair," she repeated again.

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" asked Herman, piling up two sticks.

"He's the only soldier here, and people didn't trouble about him."

"But why didn't they?" asked Sophie, exasperated. "In Berlin and other places they have a great time, don't they, and decorate the men's graves that haven't been braver than old Fritz?"

"Yes, they do," Otto spoke up after a thoughtful silence, "and everybody's going to Berlin at the end of this week to bury a soldier. I heard father say so."

"They always do, and its going to be extra this time, 'cause they've got a big man, a general or somebody, who was in the war, to speak to 'em, and they've got a lot of money and going to do things fine, band and speeches, and people will go from ever so far."

Sophie's eyes glowed.

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"I'd like to be there," she cried, clasping her hands.

"You want to be in things just the same as everybody else does. You're blaming them for not decorating old Fritz's grave and now you want to go yourself, just the same's the others," said Otto.

Sophie was silent for a moment.

"Supposing we decorate that grave ourselves?" she said slowly.

Otto stared.

"And have a procession and everything," continued the girl gravely.

"I don't suppose it makes much difference who decorates, seeing its' done, and I think our flowers would look just as good as anybody s."

"And you, Otto, and Herman"—a bit uncertain—"and perhaps Maria and Heinrich can have a nice procession and go there, and it'll be just as good as if the regular people did it."

"That would do splendidly," assented Otto, "but flags cost such a lot."

"Do you have to have flags?"

Herman nodded.

"It wouldn't be decorating without one," he decided. "You have to have one, at least, to stick into the grave, so's to tell he was a soldier. It doesn't have to be very big, but you've got to have one."

"I don't see what we can do," said Otto, discouraged. "It's only three days off, and we can't any of us go over to Müllheim to buy one, and then we haven't got the money."

"I'll make one," said Sophie.

"Oh, yes, I can!" as the boys looked at her doubtfully.

"I don't suppose it will be very good, but it'll be a flag all right, so why shouldn't it do?"

"We've got some carpet cuttings upstairs and I know I can find some pieces, 'cause my old red dress is there, and there's lots of blue calico. Only Herman will have to draw the picture on the flag; I couldn't do that."

Herman thought he could do that, and the children went back at once to begin.

* * * * *

A solitary rider on horseback rode down the country lane.

He glanced sharply to the right, then dismounting, opened a gate and turned into the faint path which led across the fields to the little church and cemetery.

He threw the reins over his horse's head and let him graze at will. Then he wandered into the little graveyard.

He had scarce reached the spot when, approaching from another direction, came a little procession of five children, laden with flowers.

A boy led the way, beating now and then on a battered drum.

The man slipped behind a tree.

The little procession passed through the gate, and, marching solemnly onward, paused beside a neglected grave.

"We must plant the flag now, Sophie," said the biggest boy.

She handed it to him.

The man leant forward. The flag was a curious affair and made him smile.

The boy took it gravely and stuck it firmly into the soft ground at the head of the grave.

"We must sing," he announced.

Five young voices in five different keys struggled bravely through "Die Wacht am Rhein."

The man drew nearer.

"Now, we must pray," said Sophie, glancing down at the paper in her hands. The five children knelt about the grave. The boys removed their caps.

"Our Father," began Sophie in a tremulous voice. The others joined her. Then Maria said a simple prayer. The rest listened in silence, but joined in "Amen."

The eyes of the looker-on filled with tears.

"Now we must put on the flowers."

Quickly but tenderly the straggling grass-grown grave was covered with flowers. They were of all colours.

"Now I'll read you a few words from the Bible about the soldier's armour," said Herman, and slowly the familiar words fell from his boyish lips.

Just then Maria's roving eye caught sight of a man, who was close beside them now. She gave a little jump.

"I will tell you the story of comrade Fritz, here," he began abruptly, but with a pleasant smile. He stood at the head of the grave bareheaded, with the sun shining on his grey hair.

They drew about him. Then he told them of Fritz's courage in war, and what the war was about and how it should teach them to be true and brave, and the children listened with scarce a breath for fear of losing a single word.

"And I had come here to-day to do honour to my fallen comrade," he added. "But I find that you have done it already—more than I could do."

He glanced at the rough flag. There were tears in his eyes.

The silk one in his hand fell to the ground.

Otto picked it up and would have planted it on the grave.

"No," said the man; "keep it. Yours alone shall do honour to-day."

And after a few more words the little procession marched away, while the general—for he was a noted general—stood watching them with head uncovered until they had vanished from sight.

Then, with a farewell glance at the flower-strewn grave with its homely flag fluttering in the soft May breeze, he rode rapidly away.

* * * * *

"And it was you, children?" Sophie's mother said the next day.

"The general told us all about it in his speech last night, and he said we must emulate your example."

She looked very proud and happy as she kissed the children.

"We'll do it every year," said Herman, looking at the new silk flag hanging on the wall.

"Of course we will," said the others.

James Hartley.

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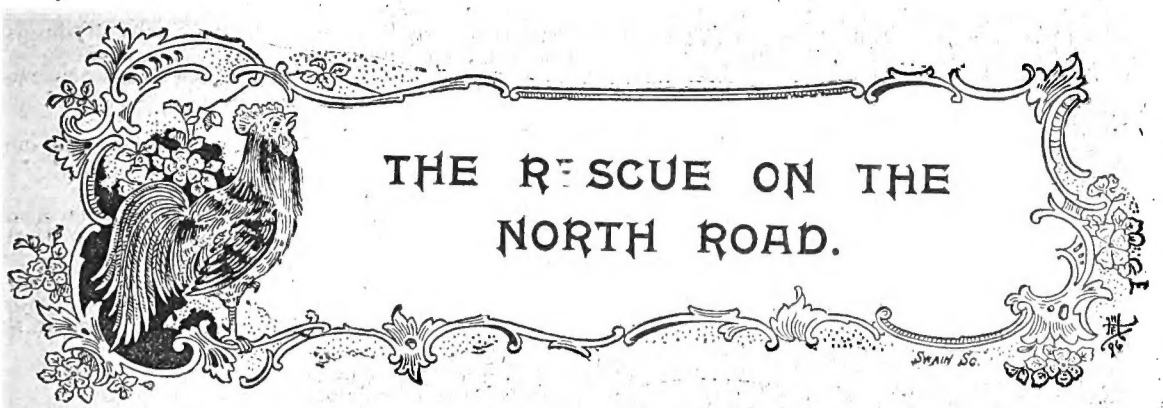

THE RESCUE ON THE NORTH ROAD.

I WAS ever a careless, hot-headed fellow; one of those whom a slight injustice will quickly drive to the bad, yet withal easily drawn back to the good by a loving hand. That were a sign of weakness, perhaps; yet I had enough strength—in the way of obstinacy and courage—to satisfy the most exacting.

Thus it happened that when my father — whose memory I still revere—blamed me for a fault that was not mine, my anger blazed up at the injustice, I shook the dust of the family mansion from my feet, saddled my good mare, and turned her head in the direction of far-off London, where I hoped by good luck to find favour with the King.

But, alack! like many another, I was disappointed; and smarting under the sense of the wrong done to me at home—now rendered more keen by the failure of my hopes—I rapidly drifted into what my dear mother used to call the crooked path.

Ask me not how I came to be dubbed a swashbuckler before I had been many months in the capital; question me not concerning the evil repute that accrued to my name; let me tell of my last adventure in that capacity, and what it led to.

I was seated at a table in the parlour of the "Black Boar" one evening. My fortunes were at a low ebb; I had had but one gold piece left when I arose that morning, and I fear that I must confess that I had spent most of the change in an endeavour to drown my sorrows. I suppose I must have fallen into a drunken slumber, for I mind me that someone shook me heavily.

I lifted my head from my chest and gazed with stupid solemnity at the figure before me; and when my muddled brain became a little clearer, I recognised Sir Reginald Wenbow, who was known to me by sight and by repute.

"Zounds!" quoth he, as he seated himself in a chair at the opposite side of the table. "I have had some trouble to find you, Master Sellon, and almost as much difficulty in waking you. You might have chosen a less evil-looking and foul-smelling place than this. And when your addled brain is——"

But I permitted him to go no farther with his insolence.

"You were under no necessity to seek me," I retorted fiercely, "and now that you have found me, let your speech be civil!" And I put my hand upon the hilt of my sword.

"Tut, tut! Keep your spleen for others. I have work for you to do."

"An' it pleases me to do it," I replied quietly.

"You are good as a fencer, I have heard," he went on, pretending not to notice my remark, though I knew by his face that he did not relish my freedom of speech, "and have had some experience of brawls."

"You forget that I am hotheaded!" I said warningly. For though I had earned the character, I liked not to be told of it; I had some good left in me.

"I am Sir Reginald Wenbow," he said.

"A name as well-known as my own," I replied with much significance. For there were some pretty stories afloat about him.

He sprang up with an oath, and half drew his blade. I quickly followed his example. Then he burst into a mirthless laugh, and sat down again.

"We cannot afford to quarrel," he said. "I want the services of a man such as you, and you want money. Let us proceed to business. We can talk freely here, as we have the room to ourselves."

It was true that I wanted money; did I not get some soon, I should have to turn common robber on the highway.

"To-morrow evening I have a little venture on hand. A lady will be in danger along the North Road beyond Islington, as she is coming into London. I have heard of the plot and I intend to save her. I want your help."

"You shall have it!" I exclaimed heartily, for a woman in distress was always sure of the succour of Master Sellon. "I want no pay for that."

"It is *my* affair," he said, "and I ask your help; so I pay for it. Seeing that you are willing to go with me, meet me to-morrow evening at six of the clock, mounted and ready at the 'Red Calf,' near the lower end of the North Road—you know it?"

"Aye," responded I, "but the mount? I have had to sell my mare."

He put some money down on the table, and, after a few more words, he left me.

I was punctual at the appointed place on the following evening, mounted upon my own mare, which I had been fortunate enough to buy back from the man to whom I had sold it. I was greatly pleased thereat, for a man feels more sure of himself on a nag whose tricks and qualities are known to him. Sir Reginald came up soon afterwards, and we set out on our—or his—venture.

It was towards autumn, and a most uncomfortable season. The wind blew chilly across the heath, and we were glad to skirt the highway and keep as much under the shelter of the trees as 'twas possible to do. Moreover, that course suited Sir Reginald's plans.

I marvelled somewhat at this venture. It seemed to

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me that had Sir Reginald been the assailant instead of the rescuer 'twould have better befitted his character.

We had ridden some distance when we came to a rise in the ground just overlooking a bend in the road. Standing in a clump of trees we should be hidden from those travelling on the road.

"We will await their arrival here," said Wenbow.

It was dusk, and the moon was covered by clouds. It was not a pleasant thing to wait there, and I began quickly to tire.

"How do you know that there is danger?" I asked after a few moments.

"Because I make it," he replied coolly.

"Mayhap, you will be good enough to explain, gentle sir," I remarked, curbing my temper. "I am no hand at riddles."

"I create the danger from which I rescue the fair lady," he went on. "I seek to win her favour, but hitherto I have met with but little success." I could well believe it if the lady had heard the stories that had come to my ears. "This is a little plot to win my way into her good graces and those of her respected guardian."

He then unfolded the course of action, which I was fain to admit was by no means a bad one.

A little more waiting, then my ears were gladdened by the sounds of travellers approaching us. Two minutes later a coach came in sight round the bend in the road.

Touching my mare with the spur, I made her jump into the path; at the same time I cried in a loud voice for the driver to pull up, and fired one pistol in the air. The object was to create the idea that several men were attacking the coach, and there was no manner of doubt that the object was attained. The driver pulled up and shouted, the horses, terrified, reared and plunged, and the man who was riding outside fired his pistol at me, slightly wounding me in the left arm.

Such a scene of confusion was rarely seen on any similar spot in His Majesty's dominions, I ween. In the midst of it up dashed Wenbow with more cries. There was a pistol shot from him, another from a man on the coach, a scream from a woman in the coach, and oaths in a man's voice from the interior of the vehicle, and then, as I dashed off—to return again as one of the rescuers in a brief space—I heard another shot and a cry of anguish from the driver.

As soon as I got to the trees I made a terrible noise as of men fighting, and then turned my mare—who had behaved as I knew she would—back to the road and returned to the coach, crying out that the villains had fled.

I was just in time to prevent the horses from running off with the coach and its occupants. Both the driver and the other man were nowhere to be seen, nor could I understand whither my companion had disappeared. Having quieted the animals, I attached the reins to a tree and was about to open the door to reassure the lady and gentleman, when I heard Wenbow groaning near by.

I found him on the ground, badly bruised; his horse had stumbled, thrown him heavily, and then bolted. I dismounted, picked him up, and carried him to the door of the coach.

"There is no further cause for alarm," I said, doffing my hat to the invisible occupants. "We have driven off the assailants, but my friend is hurt and has lost his horse, so I beg that you will take him in with you, and I will drive you to your destination."

There was no response, so, after vainly trying to penetrate the obscurity and gain a glimpse of the young and pretty maid within—I knew by her scream that she was young, and I judged her to be pretty—I opened the door.

"Are they gone? Where are our driver and our guard?" asked a gruff voice. But, in spite of his gruffness, he could not hide a tremor in his tones.

"By my faith, I know not where they are, good sir," said I, answering the last inquiry first. "But you are safe, and if you will take care of my friend, who risked his life to save you, and tell me your destination, I will drive you there."

"Why, it is none other than Sir Reginald Wenbow!" exclaimed the old gentleman.

And I heard an exclamation from the maid that methought was not quite expressive of pleasure.

However, they took him in, and the old gentleman thanked me and told me where to go; and, after vainly trying to catch a glimpse of the lady, I attached my mare to the side and prepared to mount the coach.

I thought I would give another look round for the driver. I found him stretched on the ground, dead. Wenbow must have shot him. The guard had fled.

As I walked back to the coach, I caught a glimpse of the face that I had been trying to see. In an instant it was gone in the darkness of the interior, but the features I had seen by the light of the moon, which was shining now, set my blood to leaping in my veins and my mind to pondering. Where had I seen that face? How pretty it was!

By the time we reached the mansion near the river to which the old gentleman had directed me, Wenbow had sufficiently recovered to take his venture in hand again. He dismissed me somewhat curtly, saying that he would see me on the morrow; and I, ashamed of my part in the affair, though I could not explain why, was glad to get away before that pretty damsel could see me. That was not my usual disposition.

On the morrow Wenbow called upon me, true to his word, and paid me several gold pieces, which I was fain to accept for the reason that I was without one single coin after having paid my just debts to my host of the "Black Boar." I thought that that was the last of the affair on the North Road. But I was mistaken.

Two days passed; it was the third day after the so-called rescue. I was sauntering along without purpose, and found myself passing the mansion to which I had driven the coach. I cast my eyes up at it as I went by, and then moodily continued my walk. I had proceeded some distance when I felt a touch upon my shoulder. Turning, I saw a lacquey holding a note.

"I am commissioned to give this to you and ask you to read it, Master Sellon," he said with a bow.

"How in the——," I began. But I cut my words and opened the note, even while I wondered how he knew my name and who had sent him.

"I will follow you," I told him when I had spelled out the few lines. My face flushed when I read the name at the foot of the writing, and the rascal of a lacquey noticed it—confound him!

She! How——? What——? My head was full of confused thoughts as I followed him back to the mansion which I had gazed at so wonderingly. I but dimly recall what passed until I found myself face to face with the maid of the coach!

"So I have found you at last, Master Sellon!" she cried, her pretty face all aglow with pleasure, her hand outstretched. "To think that *you* should have been

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one of our deliverers, and I should not have recognised you!"

I bent low over her hand and kissed it, to hide my shame and confusion.

"I have changed since the time we played together as children in our happy country home," I summoned courage to reply. "It is so long since you left us, and you, too, are changed, Lady Mary. I was not aware that you were in London."

"I have not been here long," she replied. "I heard Sir Reginald Wenbow call you 'Master Sellon' that night, but before I could be sure that it was you, you had disappeared. I tried to find you, and——" She paused, and then went on again in some confusion. "I saw you pass a while ago and sent after you."

I caught the glance in her eye, and I felt that in trying to find me, she had heard of my evil reputation. Despite my efforts, I blushed to the roots of my hair for very shame I should have fallen so low and that my boyhood's playmate should learn of my unworthy doings. Then my anger rose, and I felt defiant. Was it not all due to the unjust accusation brought against me?

"You have heard evil things of me," I cried, looking her boldly in the face.

"I have—many," was her response in a low voice, "but I do not believe them! My childhood's friend could not act thus!"

Heavens! How those words, uttered in that soft tone by that sweet maiden, cut me to the heart! My defiant attitude was upset, and my head fell upon my breast as I answered:

"They are true!"

"Master Sellon!" The voice was softer than ever.

My arm trembled as I felt the touch of her hand upon it. I looked up and tried to meet her eyes boldly. We thus stood for a second; and then I burst forth.

"My father drove me to it by his injustice. He accused me and slurred my honour for a sin that was not mine. I left his house and came here. But fate was against me—and——"

I stopped. The excuse seemed so pitiful, and the flush deepened on my cheeks.

"Your father has found out the truth and will gladly welcome you home," she said. "I saw him but recently." There was no chiding in her voice and I blessed her for her goodness. "Promise me," she went on, "that you will not again use your sword in unseemly brawls, and let me thank you for your bravery three nights ago."

I promised her, and asked myself whether I should tell her the truth of that adventure. As I again raised her hand to my lips, the door was flung open and in strode Sir Reginald Wenbow.

"What are you doing here, brawler?" he demanded in braggart tones. "Begone from this lady's presence!"

"What right have you to ask that question and issue that command?" I retorted. "And if I have been a brawler, you have been glad of my services. Have you told the lady the story of the rescue?"

Lady Mary looked curiously from him to me and from me to him. He became furious, and drew his sword.

"You knave!" he cried hoarsely. "I will chastise you as you deserve, and put it out of your power to tell false tales!"

"I would make you eat your words and chastise you for unseemly conduct in a lady's presence," I responded hotly, "were it not that I have promised——"

"Oh, defend yourself, Master Sellon!" screamed Lady Mary, in terror, as she saw him rush towards me with drawn sword.

I waited for nothing else. My blade leapt from its sheath, and in an instant we were fiercely engaged, while my sweet guiding angel cowered, fearful, in a corner.

The fight was a desperate one. We were both skilled in the use of the weapon, but he was the more skilful. He pinked me in the shoulder and in the arm, but try as I might I could not touch him. He laughed at me and I lunged furiously. That act of imprudence nearly cost me my life, but luckily I was quick enough to parry the thrust.

Then my turn came. His success made him careless; he gave me an opening and I took it. My blade went through him, he sank to the floor with a moan, and I leant against the wall and wept that all this should have happened before *her*, and that I should be such a brawler.

I was aroused by two things; the sound of voices and footsteps, and a cry from Mary—Lady Mary. I turned to find myself confronted by some of the King's troops.

I threw down my sword and held out my hands. I imagined that I was to be arrested for killing Sir Reginald, who—despite his character—had powerful friends. But the captain, after casting a glance at the motionless body, shook his head.

"I came for *him*," he said. "He has been found out at last in his plots against the King. You have afforded him a more honourable death than he would otherwise have had."

Then I swooned like a silly wench!

Sweet Mary! Poor Wenbow! I have to thank him and bless her for bringing me back to an honourable career. By the influence of her guardian I received an appointment in the King's service, and when my father next saw me he had reason to be proud, instead of ashamed, of me.

Lady Mary became *my* Mary three years later, after I had received the honour of knighthood at the King's hands, and has ever been my guiding angel.

Why do I say that I have to thank Wenbow in part for my good fortune? Because that good fortune resulted from my participation in the "Rescue on the North Road."

G. MERRIAM.

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Untold Tales of the Indian Mutiny.

By H. HUNTER.

II.—"AN UNCLASSIFIED QUADRUPED."

Captain Dowsett glanced up quickly from the paper on which he was writing. The orderly was bringing a man into the tent. The man, who was wearing the khaki uniform then authorised for service in the field, acknowledged the Captain's glance by bringing the two forefingers of his right hand to a level with his eyebrow, and suddenly letting his arm drop motionless to his side. He stood thus, in the military attitude of attention, till the pen ceased to travel over the paper, and Captain Dowsett, looking up again, said:

"Well, Smithers, anything fresh? I'm just closing my report."

Dowsett was the officer in command of the picket on outpost duty between Jalalabad and Sir James Outram's camp at the back of the Alambágh—the Garden of the World—which lay on the Cawnpore road about two miles from the royal city of Lucknow. Colonel Berkeley, chief of the staff, going his morning rounds, would visit the picket in due course, and Captain Dowsett was busy with his report.

"I've seen him agin, sir," replied the man.

Captain Dowsett balanced his pen on his forefinger for a couple of minutes, evidently puzzled by the statement of Private Smithers.

"It's a funny sort of story, Smithers," he said at last, throwing himself back in his cane chair and looking hard at the man, "but I suppose I ought to make a note of it. You've spoken to your right and left hand men?"

"Yus, sir."

"And what do they say?"

"They see nothin'."

"And you've seen him now, three times in as many weeks?"

"Yus, sir, reg'lar."

"But not on the same night of the week?"

"No, sir, diff'ren' nights."

"And each time he comes from the same direction, takes the same course, and disappears at the same place?"

"Yus, sir."

Captain Dowsett bent over the camp-table and recommenced writing; but presently stopped.

"Do you remember exactly when it was you saw him first?" he inquired.

"T wo days before the Pandis tried to cut off our rear at Gaili."

"Yes, and the next? Just go over the story again, Smithers, will you? I'll put it in my report for the Colonel. It's a curious sort of tale certainly, but at least it will show the Headquarter Staff that we keep our eyes open out here, and if anything comes of it I'll see that you get the corporal's stripes."

"Well, sir," began Smithers, a little awkwardly—he didn't relish having to "yarn" to the Captain—"it was the week before Chris'mas, yer know, when I went on at the batt'ry what the Engineers is makin' up there between the camp and the fort. An' one night, leastways it was dark, there was no moon, but the sky was clear with a fair sprinkle o' stars, an' I reckoned it was about two or three a.m. Well, I see somethin' come out o' that there mango tope—you know the patch, sir——"

The Captain nodded.

"An' creep along in the shadder, close to the groun', till it was opposite the garden wall of the mosque that's between us and the villages down by the canal.

"I see it leap over the wall, slip roun' the mosque, and then disappear."

"Yes," from the Captain.

"'What the dickens is that now?' says I. 'Tain't a man, I'll bet my life; an' there's no hanimals as I knows of in that mango tope.'

"Then I pinched meself to make sure as I wasn't dreamin'. It was a fair buster, Capt'in. Whatever it might be, it was a dark objec' that went on four legs. It got over the groun' pretty fast, and seemed to go with a hop, step, an' a run.

"The queerest part o' the bis'ness to my thinkin' was that it should slink along just outside the trees but well inside the shadder, as if afraid o' showin' its ugly mug in the open, never stoppin' for a look roun' or to smell at nothin', as you'd naturally expec' any proper sort of hanimal would do; but keepin' on with a shamblin' sort o' trot straight for the old mosque what we drove the Pandis out of last October.

"'There ain't nothin' to eat there, mister,' thinks I; and then Sharland, my left-hand man, challenging: 'All's well,' and everythin' being quiet in front, I jest put it at the back o' me mind, till I gets another chance with him.

"That, sir, come on New Year's night. It was jest sich another night as before. The moon went down about twelve, an' save for a han'ful o' stars the sky was as black as ink.

"Every time I came abreast o' that mango tope I watched it with all my eyes.

"By and bye, I see something moving slowly along the edge—it was goin' stealthy-like, an' I watched it for all I knew. It wasn't a walk, it wasn't a run. It was on all fours, with its nose to the groun', goin' between a creep and a crawl, its legs gathered up under it; like no hanimal as I ever see, in field or forest.

"'You're a rum un,' says I, 'whatever breed you belong to: an' if I on'y had the loan o' the Captain's glass for one five minutes, I guess I'd put a name to your old carkiss, and maybe a bullet thro' your black old hide.'

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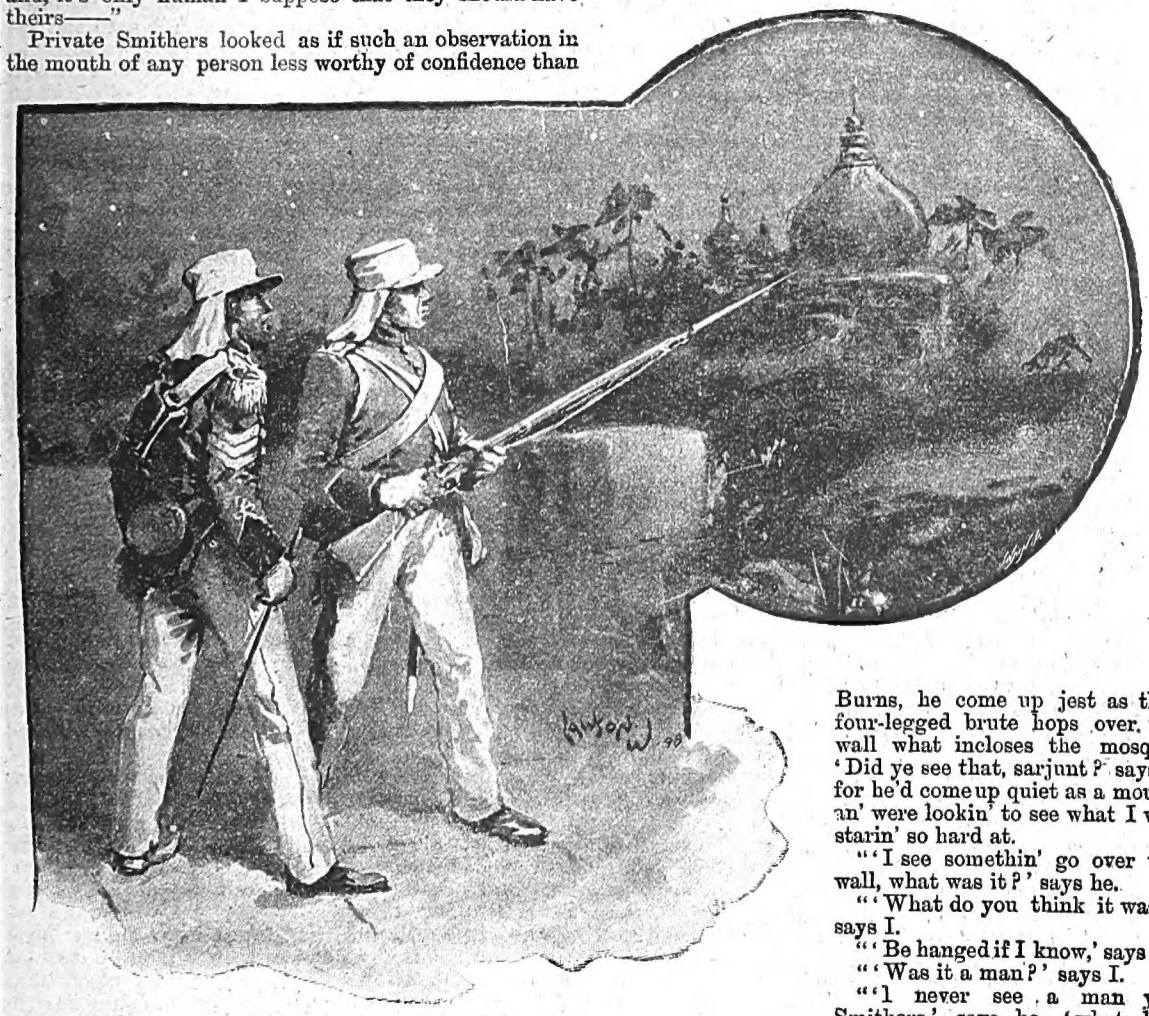
"I minds, sir, all of a suddent, what Cun'nel Barkley said after the scrimmage at Gaili. 'Them rascals,' says he, 'have got somebody who's supplyin' 'em with information. They couldn't ha' gone straight for the key o' the whole position by 'appy haccident.' You remember, sir?"

"Yes," said Dowsett, "I remember. There's no doubt information is conveyed. We've got our spies: and, it's only human I suppose that they should have theirs——"

Private Smithers looked as if such an observation in the mouth of any person less worthy of confidence than Captain Dowsett would have brought down upon the head of the unfortunate offender a perfect avalanche of barrack-room expletives and stable-yard objurgations.



"'Did ye see that, sarjunt?' says I."

"And that we," continued the Captain, catching sight of Smithers' face and amused at the look of supreme disgust that was plainly expressed there, "that we should catch them and hand them over to the tender mercies of the Military Commission. So you imagine this unclassified quadruped to be a spy—eh?"

For the moment, Private Smithers was brought up "all standing." His own vocabulary was limited. The unfamiliar words made use of by his officer in describing the "hanimal," sounded in his ears uncommonly like laughing at *him*; and not being quite able to gather their exact meaning, he was dumb.

The Captain came to his man's assistance.

"And this time of sighting him, you spoke to the sergeant?"

"Yus, sir," said Smithers. The question started him again on the main track of his narrative. "Sarjunt Burns, he come up jest as that four-legged brute hops over the wall what incloses the mosque. 'Did ye see that, sarjunt?' says I, for he'd come up quiet as a mouse, an' were lookin' to see what I was starin' so hard at.

"'I see somethin' go over the wall, what was it?' says he.

"'What do you think it was?' says I.

"'Be hanged if I know,' says he.

"'Was it a man?' says I.

"'I never see a man yet, Smithers,' says he, 'what had four legs to his share, and that brute, I'll swear had got four of 'em, an' a tail as long as a cow's behind 'em.'

"'It come out o' that mango tope,' says I, 'went all along there by the fringe o' trees, slunk thro' the high crop, shuffled across the bit o' scrub yonder; then popp'd over the wall, slipped roun' the side o' the mosque and went down by the bamboo huts to the canal.'

"'Gone for a drink, p'raps,' says the sarjunt. 'Drink be hanged,' says I.

"'Jack Pandi ho'ds all that groun' over there, don't he? He's in the villages on the canal, ain't he? How came he to go straight for our right centre at Gaili? That four-legged beggar give 'im the tip. How else, eh?'

"'There ain't no beasts in that mango tope that we

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knows of, sarjunt, is there? An' beasts, I reckin, can't do with on'y one drink a week mor'n men.'

"'This ain't the fust time I've seen this 'ere beast,' says I. 'I didn't make any report, no. 'Cos why? Well, you see, I'd on'y got half a tale to tell, an' the ripple o' laughter isn't a pleasant soun' to hear when the laugh's agin yerself, sarjunt. What do you think?'

"'He come out o' the mango tope—this brute, beast or devil—two nights before gaili; and went thro' jest the same performance then, that he's gone thro' now; an' tho' I watched till me eyes fair stood out o' me head wi' strainin', I couldn't make up my mind what name to give him. I couldn't get a fair look at him no-how, any more than I've done to-night.'

"'But I'll bet he ain't one o' the beasts what went into the Ark—leastways not on four legs. None o' Noah's beasts would ha' been so mighty par'ticlar abart keepin' his carkiss close in the shadder, or so uncommon careful to choose the darkest hour o' night, the nearest spot to the garden wall, an' jest the very place to come out on, where he's least exposed to observation from the picket. It's only from this one point,' says I, 'as we're standin' on, sarjunt, that you can see both the corner of the grove and the wall of the mosque; an' it's bad seein' at the best in this light.'

"'I b'lieve you're right, Smithers,' says Sarjunt Burns. 'He didn't jump like a beast, did he now?"

"'No,' says I, 'not like a nat'ral sort o' beast. An' he didn't jump like a man either. These black scum keep all sorts o' gods an devils in their heathen temples. Why shouldn't it be some monstrosity without a name, eh? One o' Satan's own fathering, you understan'.'

"'I don't know why it shouldn't,' says he, 'but I'll speak to the Captain.'

"Yes," interjected that officer, who, having got all the facts he wanted, was anxious to close his report, "and I asked you to report to me, Smithers, if you saw the beast again."

"Yus, sir."

"And you have seen him again?"

"Yus, sir."

Smithers, thankful the "yarning" was over, answered the direct questions of his captain with military brevity.

"But you can't say now, positively, what it is?"

"No, sir. 'Taint a beast as was ever born in a jungle."

"The same actions were repeated on this occasion as on the former?"

"There was no difference, sir, as I could see. He always appears and vanishes at the same points. I never see anythin' of him after he whips roun' the side o' that old mosque. He never comes back, sir—after he's had his drink," added Private Smithers slily.

Captain Dowsett laughed.

"You may go now, but I'll come and keep watch with you at the battery to-night."

"An' see nothin' for your pains," muttered Smithers to himself, as he left the captain's tent. "That devil's dog don't venture out of his hole, wherever he hides, any too often, I reckon. He ain't gone across the canal for nothin' this time, I guess.

"Them Pandis have been a deuced sight too quiet, since we give 'em pepper at Gaili not to mean mischief. There's trouble a brewin'—an' be hanged to 'em, more widders, an' orphins in the old country.

"Praise the Lord, Bob Smithers, that ye're not a married man."

II.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon of the 15th of January, 1858.

Captain Dowsett was enjoying a cigar. He had watched with Private Smithers at the unfinished battery on the Cawnpoor road every night for best part of a week; but, as Smithers had anticipated, without being gratified with a sight of "the beast."

He had briefly noticed the matter in his daily report after his interview with his man, and Colonel Berkeley had brought it before the General; but nothing had followed, and the Captain was very much inclined to think that the Indian night and Smithers' imagination were responsible for the apparition.

At that very moment an Englishman—a member of the Uncovenanted Service—disguised as a native swashbuckler; wearing tight silk trousers, tight fitting muslin shirt and short silk jacket of brilliant yellow, his face stained with lamp black and oil, and his feet encased in scarlet slippers with curled uppers and pointed toes was detailing to Sir James Outram and Colonel Berkeley the exact position of affairs in the city.

So closely in his dress and appearance did he resemble one of the *Budmashis*, whose garb he had adopted, that he was fired on twice by the picket before he got safely inside the British lines and declared himself. He had run the double risk of discovery by the rebels and death from the bullet of an English sentry.

He brought word that for the past fortnight Ahmad Shah, the famous Moulvie of Faizabad had been preaching a holy war against the English, and working up the rebels, both Hindoostanis and Mussulmans, to a pitch of fanatical frenzy by declaring that the god Hanumán had visited the city and disclosed to the Chief Brúhmin the weakness of the British position.

There was, said the Moulvie, over a hundred thousand armed men in Lucknow and less than four thousand white faces outside; and of these, five hundred had been detached to convoy supplies on the way from Cawnpore.

Sir James looked at Colonel Berkeley and the Colonel looked back at Sir James. There was no need for speech.

The look they exchanged said plain as spoken words: "Someone is playing traitor."

Hanúmán, so ran the narrative delivered by the speaker, had directed the attack to be made between the 12th and 16th of the month. They were favourable days, and he had promised, himself, to lead his followers to the assault.

Victory, the Moulvie had urged upon the men, was certain. The new batteries were without guns, the battery near the fort was unfinished, only half a Company was on duty there; and Hanúmán would be with his people in the fight, to show them where to strike the decisive blow.

"The Moulvie," added the informant, "left the city with a considerable force on the previous night, his objective being Banni."

"Exactly," remarked the General quietly. "With intent to cut off the convoy, of whose approach he has had warning. Then he must have turned our camp, Berkeley, and taken up position on the Cawnpore Road."

"By the way, Mr. Rollinson," he continued, addressing the gay looking individual in silk jacket and cream coloured turban. "What you tell us about Hanúmán is welcome news. It clears up a little matter concerning which there's been much speculation and a good deal of

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mystery. That's the beast, Colonel, which figures in Dowsett's report," he said, turning to Colonel Berkeley. "The four legged nondescript which his man saw come out of the mango tope. The man could swear to four legs and a tail but wouldn't go beyond that," and, in spite of the serious nature of the information he had just lis ened to, Sir James laughed heartily at Smithers' description of the "hanimal."

"We must get that fellow," said he, "alive if possible; strip off his monkey's hide and see what's the true colour of his skin. But black or white, he'll get a short shrift if we lay hands on him.

"Offer a reward, Colonel, of five hundred rupees to the man who takes him, and I hope it may be Private Smithers."

III.

When darkness came down on the British camp outside Lucknow on the night of the 15th January, 1858, each man gripped his weapon tighter as he swore to bring in "Hanúmán," and made ready to answer the call whenever it should come. Eyes and ears on the strain, nerves tingling for the fight, hearts beating high and fast, brains throbbing and pulses thrilling; alive and alert to the finger tips, they peered through the darkness and listened for every sound. Few perhaps, but fit; less than four thousand in all, but every file and every rank, black as well as white—for there are black faces too amongst that gallant four thousand—animated by the single desire to avenge the ruthless slaughter of helpless women and innocent children.

The General's offer of five hundred rupees for Hanúmán, the spy who was masquerading as the monkey-god, and the chances of capturing him were discussed at every camp fire with much zest and eagerness, alternating with the equally interesting question of the particular point where the attack would be delivered.

But the night wore away and no alarm had been given.

Olpherts had gone out along the Banni Road with two guns and a detachment of horse; and subsequently the rest of the battery and the 90th regiment were sent to support him.

But at the camp profound stillness reigned.

Towards three in the morning the convoy came in with the supplies.

At eight breakfast was called. The men broke off, grumbling and disappointed. They had been kept under arms all night for nothing.

"Hanúmán," had broken faith. "His courage," said they, "had oozed out at his tail, and 500 rupees had gone with it."

Suddenly the sound of firing was heard in the direction of the uncompleted battery on the right. The picket was driven in, and with loud yells the mutineers swarmed to the entrenchments. The men rushed to arms. The rebels were in force and the fight for the battery began in grim earnest.

"Eighty-fourth, to the front," shouted Captain Dowsett, springing forward and waving his sword aloft. At the same moment catching sight of a queer figure brandishing a heavy tulwar, and urging his fellows to the attack.

"Hanúmán! Hanúmán, the spy!" he cried, pointing to the strange looking figure which was 'made up' to represent the monkey-god of Benares. "Take him men! Take him *alive!*"

The cry was taken up by Brasyer's Sikhs, it spread to Mande's Riflemen and Down's Fusiliers.

Presently the entire British right was yelling like demons possessed, "Hanúmán! Hanúmán!! Take him alive!"

The suddeness and savageness of the cry, coming as it did from so many hundreds of British throats, seemed to strike a panic into the hearts of the rebels. They wavered.

Dowsett with three companies of the 84th, and Brasyer with his detachment of loyal Sikhs, held the post of honour. Eagerly watching for chances, and as eagerly supported by their fellows, they saw the opportunity and embraced it.

In a very few minutes the rebels were driven from the entrenchments. The battery they held longer. Finding however, that they were making no progress on the left which had been attacked simultaneously with the right they began to retire.

Up to this point, "Hanúmán" had managed to "cheat the devil," but now a desperate attempt was made to capture him.

It became a struggle between Brasyer's Sikhs and the men of the 84th. With these it was not simply a question of rupees. They felt their honour touched. The spy belonged to their man; and the 84th determined not to be robbed of what was their lawful prey.

The rebels on their part, stuck bravely to their monkey-god or his representative, and lost heavily for their allegiance. To them, ignorant of the order of the British General, the fact that "Hanúmán" remained unharmed amidst the hail of balls and rain of blows was proof convincing of his divinity. So they fell where they stood, and their bodies made a wall round Hanúmán.

But the end came at last.

"Smithers! Where's Smithers?" shouted Captain Dowsett.

The rebels were in full retreat. The Queen's colours were waving above the battery, and a queer object was squatting on the ground surrounded by a crowd of curious white faces.

Smithers had gone down only a minute before, with a sabre cut across the forehead. But the rivalry was generous.

Not a man there, but felt that the honour of capture belonged fairly to Bob Smithers. It was he who started the "hare," and had stuck to his story through joke and jest, even when the captain seemed inclined to desert him.

They helped him to his feet, bound his head round with a handkerchief and led him to the spot where the spy cowered against the low parapet. There, Private Smithers formally handed over "Hanúmán" to the custody of Captain Dowsett.

The man was a native officer, a member of the Order of British India, and in the enjoyment of a pension from the British Government. He was blown away from a gun the same evening.

The five hundred rupees were divided between Smithers and the two men who were the actual captors, the money carrying a sergeant's stripes in the one case, and a corporal's in the other.

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The Tell-Tale Handkerchief.

Philip Waring walked along with a quick, nervous tread. His mouth was set determinedly, and a deep flush of red dyed each cheek. Philip had a guilty feeling that everyone he passed knew that his engagement with Gladys Lawton was broken, and that there reposed in his left-hand pocket, to be returned to their owner, one dozen little notes on heavy white paper, monogram G.L., and in his right-hand pocket a diamond scarf pin and six dainty handkerchiefs, with fluffy boarders, essentially feminine. Why Philip defied custom in returning these articles in person the little god of Love alone knows.

A far more imposing array of gifts and love tokens was being collected at the other end of the line, for Phil was a generous soul, and his lady-love most chary of her favours. Letter writing she detested, and the answers to his daily notes were, to his disgust, few and far between. As to the handkerchiefs—thereby hangs a tale, for Gladys was one of those most unfortunate beings—a girl without a pocket—and could be traced anywhere by the dainty squares of cambric and lace she left behind her.

Phil's hand involuntarily tightened over the packet which aroused such bitter-sweet remembrances. One of these dainty articles he pilfered the day they became engaged, and was sacred in Phil's sight, for it had wiped away two happy tears from Gladys' big blue eyes. Another had been put in his pocket for safe keeping one evening, as they were going to see a famous tragedian.

"Keep it for me Phil, for I know I shall cry," said Gladys, fully conscious of her weaknesses.

It was not needed, for the play proved more glad than sad, and Philip added the bit of cambric to his rapidly-growing collection.

Another of Phil's souvenirs had been used one happy night to bandage a finger he had bruised in raising a window.

He smiled to himself as he remembered how many times he had heard an agonised whisper: "Please lend me your handkerchief, Phil; I can't think what has become of mine." This common occurrence had caused Phil, in making his toilet, to invariably add one extra for Gladys and her emergencies.

Phil heaved a sigh that would have been a credit to the stagiest lover, and his honest heart thumped vigorously as he walked up the steps of Mrs. Lawton's house.

"Ah, well, Gladys is the only girl in the world for me, but our first quarrel is to be our last, for she does not care for me, that's evident, fool that I was!"

And he pulled the bell so savagely that Polly, the maid, fairly flew to the door. Phil's eyes dropped as he met the beaming gaze of the maid. Polly, who had opened the door so sympathisingly through all the stages of his courtship; she, at least, would be sorry there was to be no wedding, and Phil's voice faltered a trifle as he asked for Miss Lawton.

"She is in her boudoir, sir," Polly said in her usual encouraging tones.

Phil hesitated to enter her private sanctum, where Gladys received only her intimate friends. He felt that it would be a hard matter to end his engagement in that room.

"I think I will wait in here," he said, going towards the drawing-room.

"Oh, sir, Mrs. Lawton has some callers in there!" said Polly, and led the way to the sacred precincts so familiar to him of late. No one was there, and Waring sat down in a remote corner, feeling ill at ease with these surroundings.

It was a quaint apartment, so full of Gladys' fads and fancies that you felt that you had been taken into her confidence the moment you entered the room. Miniature gardens grew in the windows, the glass bowl on the table was overflowing with roses, and dainty bric-à-brac of every description, such as girls love, were lavishly scattered everywhere.

A fantastic little clock ticked away merrily on the mantle-piece. It had never been known to tell the right time, and Philip had learnt to love it for its happy faculty of insisting it was only ten o'clock, when well-regulated timepieces were mildly hinting it was nearly twelve.

Gladys was studying Greek history and sculpture, and the usual pictures in the room had been removed to give place to her attic treasures. The Parthenon had the place of honour over the piano, and the gods and goddesses were assembled on the walls in almost as great numbers as in the days of old when they had gathered on Mount Olympus.

Phil grew uneasy as a flood of associations rolled over him, and he moved restlessly about. There on the desk was that mummy hand paper-weight which old Marsden had sent to Gladys at Christmas. How jealous he had been of Marsden for the pleasure his present had given! He remembered how cuttingly he had remarked that it was just like his meanness to offer her some other fellow's hand!

On the table was the novel they had been reading together. Phil had used his scarf-pin as a book-mark, and it had been left undisturbed.

Glancing up at the chandelier above his head, he remembered how, that last Christmas eve, it had been adorned with mistletoe, and, as he had stood in this same spot, Gladys—shy, reserved, undemonstrative Gladys—had softly stolen up behind him, and actually——

Phil shook himself impatiently, put his hands in his pockets, and turned towards the window. Yes, Gladys had evidently just left the room—fled, he supposed, when she heard his voice. Drawn up in front of the open window was her favourite lounge-chair, in which she curled herself comfortably, like a cat.

In the depths of the chair a small white object attracted Phil's attention. Mechanically, from pure force of habit, he stooped to pick it up, and a wretched little specimen of a handkerchief it was. It looked as if Telemachus had wept abundantly upon it, and Niobe added her ceaseless tears. It was as damp as a cobweb left out overnight in the dew.

A glad light came into Phil's eyes. Gladys crying—Gladys unhappy! Rapturous thought—she must care for him, after all. Philip drew a long breath that sounded like a sob. There was a light step on the stair, a rustle of drapery in the hall, and she entered.

"Gladys," said Phil, pocketing the tell-tale treasure. "I came to tell you—how much I love you!"

L. P. Wilson.

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Begin this Magnificent Serial To-day.

THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Shadow Hand," "An American Emperor," "The Lost Provinces," etc.

SUMMARY.

Time 1898. Irene, daughter of Lord Eskdale, Ambassador at Paris, is engaged to Captain Edward Harington, Lord Eskdale's military *attaché*, and Lieutenant Rodney, of H.M.S. *Magnificent*, to Harington's sister, Ethel.

Lord Eskdale has very good reasons to believe that France and Germany are meditating an immediate invasion of England. He, therefore, dispatches Harington to London to warn the Premier, and Rodney to warn the British admiral established in the Mediterranean.

CHAPTER III.

The Scene in the House.

Early the following morning it was known throughout London that something unusual was happening.

The lynx-eyed chroniclers of Ministerial movements brought to Fleet Street the intelligence that the Foreign Office had been thrown into unwonted commotion, as soon as it was opened, by the arrival from Paris of a young officer who sent in an urgent demand to see Lord Salisbury or the Under-Secretary.

The Prime Minister was away, but after the messenger had been closeted with the Under-Secretary for ten minutes, a telegram was dispatched to Hatfield, and special communications were sent to the residences of all the Cabinet Ministers summoning them to an immediate meeting. Meanwhile, the Under-Secretary had driven over to the War Office, where, in a short time, he was in close conference with Lord Lansdowne, the Duke of Devonshire, and the Commander-in-Chief.

Wild rumours of every description were soon rife in the city, but the mood of the public generally, was one of incredulity. In the absence of certain information it was felt that the importance of these incidents had been unduly exaggerated.

Never had the political horizon been more serene, or the sense of public security more strong. Still, curiosity was sufficiently roused to draw a large number of spectators to the assembling of the House of Commons at midday.

But the aspect of the House was not one calculated to allay anxiety. Its members, as if constrained by a common impulse, had gathered from far and near in full numbers. There was no vestige of the carelessness which is generally to be discerned on days usually set apart for private business. Scattered about the precincts of the House in groups, they were earnestly discussing the occurrences of the morning, oppressed with vague forebodings that presaged a crisis.

Within the Chamber itself the scene was still less reassuring. The front Ministerial bench was absolutely unoccupied, and none but lieutenants kept watch and ward. Even the Opposition leaders were missing, save in two instances, and it was noticed with surprise and consternation that these gentlemen were summoned away almost as soon as they arrived. Excitement grew to a high pitch of tension when it was learnt that a joint meeting of party leaders was then being held in the apartments of the Leader of the House, and that a courier had been dispatched by special train to Windsor.

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Alone, amid all this bewilderment, one small body of men sat, grim and unmoved, as if disturbed by no passions but their own, and with minds firm set upon a common purpose. It was the Irish party, who had been fortunate enough to secure first place in the ballot for precedence upon this day, and were seeking to convince their fellow members of the urgent importance of an Act to secure self-government for the county of Cork. Whilst the gravest statements were flying about the corridors of the House, and Liberals and Conservatives alike were thrilled with the sense of a common peril, the Irishmen did not swerve for a moment from their purpose.

The debate had commenced in an acrimonious manner; it had now become tragic. Finding no Cabinet Minister to assail, the Irish members consoled themselves by assailing each other. Mr. Healy had denounced Mr. Justin McCarthy, Mr. Sexton had denounced Mr. Healy, and Mr. Redmond had fallen on all three. The speeches disclosed a remarkable versatility in terms of abuse which reached its height when Mr. Dillon observed, amidst loud applause, that "the British Lion would have his wings clipped unless he washed his hands in the flames of repentance," and added that "Mr. Balfour had been for five years the hereditary enemy of the Irish."

Conspicuous amongst all was Dr. Tanner, whose crude and elementary style seemed born of the rude shocks of Parliamentary adversity. Twice had he sought to stretch the rules of the House as far as he might without breaking them, and twice had the Speaker called him to order and threatened to name him. The debate had already lasted three hours. Dr. Tanner had got to the length of shaking his fist under the nose of a mild and inoffensive brother who had unfortunately cheered him at the wrong moment, and the Speaker was on the point of rising to fulfil the usual painful duty of bidding him withdraw, when, from behind Mr. Gully's chair, Mr. Arthur Balfour appeared, followed by every occupant of the Treasury Bench, whilst the Opposition leaders also quietly took their places. Upon each face there was an air of gravity which not even the severest issues had hitherto called forth.

A swift movement passed over the House, and in a moment—as though its members had learnt the arrival of Ministers by intuition—every seat was occupied. Rarely had the Second Chamber been so crowded. Excitement grew when it was noticed that Lord Salisbury had entered the Peers' Gallery, and with him the Cabinet Ministers who belonged to the Upper House. There was a dead silence—the oppressive stillness that is less a calm than the momentary pause in the fury of a tempest. Dr. Tanner sat down abruptly, awed by the solemnity of the moment.

Without delay, and amidst a general hush, the Leader of the House rose to his feet. As he advanced to the table it was noticed that he had no longer the languid manner commonly ascribed to him. He stood upright, pale, stern, determined, with an air of resolute pride and the dignity befitting a supreme occasion. There was no need for him to claim, in formal language, the indulgence of the House for interrupting its proceedings on a matter of State of pressing importance. Every eye was directed to him, every ear was strained to catch his opening words.

"There devolves upon me, sir," he began, turning for a moment to the Speaker, and not without a trace of emotion in his voice, "a grave and responsible duty. I have to inform the House that a crisis has arrived more serious and more pressing than any which has hitherto occurred in the history of this country. Without warning and without just cause, whilst enjoying prosperity at home and in apparent peace with all the world, in the fulness of that content and happiness which have marked the reign of a wise and beneficient Sovereign to whom we draw still closer in loyalty and affection at a moment of common trial, we are faced with a danger which calls for all our courage and all our patriotism. Three hours ago there was placed in the hands of Her Majesty's Government a declaration of war from France and Germany."

These words, spoken slowly and distinctly, as if he felt that each syllable was a winged messenger of fate laden with woe and misery unutterable, fell upon the ears of the House in a deathlike stillness. For a moment its members seemed stunned. Mr. Balfour's statement was difficult to credit, hard to understand, and, in the solemn stillness which followed, the House seemed groping in amazement to discover the sense of the phrases they had heard, to realise the terrible import that they bore.

And then a thrill swept through the Chamber—a thrill of horror, of indignation, but not of fear. The House of Commons never looked more dignified, and impressive than when, after its first impulse of surprise, it sat rigid and impassive to hear the full story of this catastrophe.

"When I tell you, sir," continued Mr. Balfour, "that by the terms of this declaration we have not merely to anticipate the attack of two powerful enemies, but that we may expect it now, at this very moment—that, in fact, hostilities have already commenced—this House will realise that the present is not a time for lengthy explanation. It will be enough for me to say that, without previous negotiations, demands have suddenly been made of Her Majesty's Government—demands which were shameful to receive, and shameful to repeat in this House. Our enemies, whom yesterday we deemed our friends, asked nothing less than the dismemberment of the British Empire, and I need not say that it was in consequence of the immediate and scornful rejection of this ultimatum that the declarations of war, signed by the heads of the two combined nations, were handed to us. We," and here Mr. Balfour drew himself up to his full height and turned upon the House, "we needed not the formality of a conference with the Parliament of England to indignantly cast aside the terms of peace, such as they were. We knew that you stood, in equal scorn and unanimity, behind us."

He paused, and in a moment a ringing cheer went up. The House had regained its composure, if it had lost nothing of its excitement, and a wave of passionate emotion passed over it, fusing all parties into one—the party that stood behind all differences and made the English nation.

The Leader of the House then explained in greater detail, how the two Ambassadors had called upon Lord Salisbury, and how the terms they asked had been peremptorily rejected. They had then handed in the formal declarations of war, which dated from midday. Free passage from England had been demanded and granted, and the representatives of France and Germany were no longer on our shores. There was redoubled excitement when he described the prompt action of the Government.

"At such a juncture," he continued, "when England is face to face with two of the strongest nations of Europe—and Heaven grant that this be all!—it is no time for the accentuation of party differences. Two allied countries should at least be faced by a united people. We deemed we should be best showing the indomitable strength and single patriotism of our beloved land if for purposes of national defence, the line of political difference should entirely disappear. It was with this idea foremost, and, secondly, to ally with ourselves the best intellect, and resource of England, that Her Majesty's Government sent for the leaders of the Liberal Party and asked them to assist in forming a Council of National Safety.

"It is, I am aware," he went on, amid enthusiastic cheers, "an unusual course, but our danger is also unusual. It is no time to stand by the shibboleths of form or precedent. It would be almost an insult to add that such assistance was given as soon as asked, and that a Council has been formed by mutual agreement which includes all that is most wise and most experienced in English statesmanship.

"If our enemies have counted upon the acerbities of party warfare as an evidence of a disunited nation, they

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will learn, bitterly and to their cost, that the tumult of political strife can never disturb, however slightly or remotely, the deep and eternal love that we all bear alike to our native land. They will come to realise that jealousy and rivalry pass away before the dangers that threaten us, and that we stand before the foe one race, one empire, one people, one party."

Mr. Balfour sat down amid a scene of extraordinary enthusiasm. He had struck, nobly and well, the one note common to all Englishmen.

There was a moment's pause, and then Sir William Harcourt rose. His voice was broken with emotion as in brief words he thanked the Leader of the House for giving utterance with fervour so intense to the feelings of all parties. "Sir," he concluded, turning full upon the Speaker, "from this moment there is no Opposition. The very term ceases to exist in the hour that our shores are threatened by a foreign foe. The Government has no supporters more warm than those who in time of peace have been compelled by conviction to oppose its policy."

The nerves of the House were so overwrought that it was perhaps well there should have occurred something in the nature of an anti-climax. The Irish party had given no sign of the feelings that actuated them when Mr. Joseph Chamberlain rose to continue the discussion with a few incisive words. He recalled to the memory of the House some recent utterances of M. Constans in the French Senate.

"That statesman," he observed, "has not refrained from hinting at disunion on our own shores. He has plainly told us that a foreign enemy might look for help from Ireland, but"—and the right honourable gentleman glanced fixedly at the Irish benches—"he went on to say that if the French Government had to deal with similar threats of disloyalty from any essential member of the Republic, they would speedily settle insubordination by sending the ringleaders to New Caledonia."

He was continuing when, to the amazement of the House, Dr. Tanner leapt to his feet, evidently under the stress of ungovernable excitement. Advancing several steps along the floor of the House between the crowded benches of startled members and hastily unbuttoning his frock coat, he exclaimed fiercely;

"Did he say that?"

Then tearing one arm out and exposing a white shirt sleeve, he cried out to Mr. Chamberlain:

"Tell him what *I* say. Tell him that if he dares to set his dirty foot in this country I'll fight him and his bottle-holders single-handed myself!"

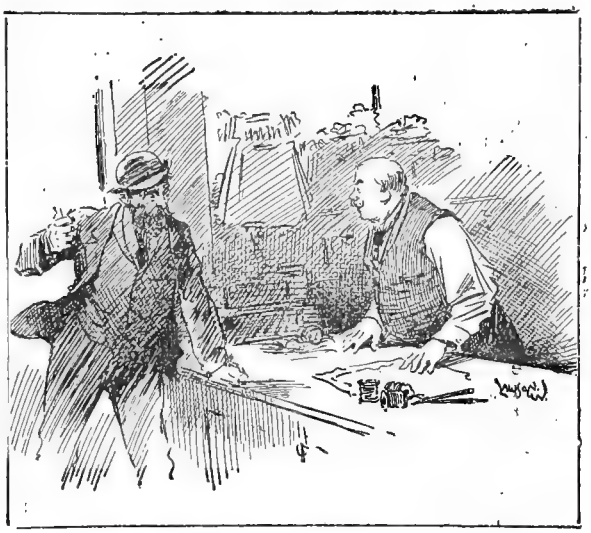
So saying, he flung off his coat into the middle of the gangway and, to the amazement of all and the consternation of those near him, squared up his fists as if he were then and there desirous of tackling M. Constans and bringing him to book in the very presence of the august Chamber.

The re-action had come. Mr. Chamberlain hastily sat down, and the House, in relief after its pent-up excitement, first shrieked with laughter and then exhausted itself in wild applause.

For the first time in his parliamentary career, Dr. Tanner had violated a strict law of the House and remained unrebuked.

It needed but the moment and it had arrived. The Irish party rose by a common impulse, and, standing upon their benches, cheered and cheered to the echo the utterances of their comrade, who, with the feelings of a hero, modestly resumed his seat, half awed by the unusual spectacle of an indulgent House. It was noted afterwards, as a significant fact, that it was Mr. Chamberlain himself who had succeeded in rousing this splendid burst of patriotism from the Irish members.

But the House quickly regained its ordinary gravity when Mr. Balfour again addressed it. He begged members to consider ways and means. They must not imagine that however great the surprise, the country was unprepared. Even at that moment the War Office was in close consultation with the Admiralty and with the authorities at the Horse Guards. He asked them, however, to pass a Bill granting



He was busy behind the counter when the strange tidings reached him.

the Government fifty million pounds for war purposes, and he suggested that the Bill might be read a third time and become law that day.

Mr. Balfour passed on, and informed the House that the Government had resolved to reduce the charges on Consols as recommended, thus freeing their hands for further loans, and had already closed the Stock Exchange to prevent a financial panic. Government brokers would be appointed for the transaction of necessary business. "As an evidence of the gravity of the situation," he added, "I may state that during the progress of this debate, I have learnt that every British cable has been cut since midday, and our enemies have only, left us in telegraphic communication with the United States, as to cut the Atlantic cable would be an act of war with the American nation."

There was no need for further discussion. Within ten minutes after the reading of the brief Bill which granted the Government fifty millions, it had been passed a third time. Dr Tanner once more found himself popular by his willingness to disencumber the House of business.

"Let it not be said, sir," he declared, "that Ireland is not willing to make sacrifices at a time of peril. We will withdraw the County of Cork Self-Government Bill for six months, and in saying this, I know that the people of Cork are at my back. (Loud cheers from the Irish Benches.) We are the more ready to take this step, sir, because we see before us the prospects of a holy row worthy even of the best energies of the Irish party At such a moment, Cork is in the van" (Renewed applause.)

The House rose at five o'clock. In two hours it had received the announcement of war and had made every preparation in its power to meet the enemy. The Briton is perhaps rightly accused of being stolid. It is certain that the members of Parliament left Westminster with as much *sang froid* as if they had just given their sanction to a new railway bill, or had resolved to add a shilling to the dog-tax.

But the news had long since spread through London and been flashed to the remotest districts of the United Kingdom. The public at first received the thrilling intelligence with

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incredulity, but as their doubts were dispersed, an intense desire to be up and doing made itself felt throughout the country and in the Metropolis. Business in London was at a standstill. The streets were crowded with what, at another time, might be regarded as a mob, but was now clearly recognisable as a national gathering animated with one thought one purpose, one enthusiasm.

There needed some outlet for the high-wrought feeling that prevailed. It was fortunately provided by the statement that Her Majesty the Queen had left Windsor, and was on her way to Buckingham Palace to take up her residence in the Capital during the time of war, so as to be near her people and her Ministers.

There was a mighty rush of the excited multitude to Hyde Park, and as the Queen passed through in an open carriage, though the days were still cold, a wild, vociferous

"I'm not dead yet, lads!"

tumult of inextinguishable cheering rose from the vast throng. It was a nation voicing its own patriotism to its visible head.

When Her Majesty reached the Palace, the Mall and Buckingham Palace Road were crammed tumultuously. Distinctions of rank had faded with differences of political conviction, and, without waiting for solicitation, the Queen appeared upon the balcony leaning on the arm of her eldest son.

There she remained several minutes, firm, proud, and erect, whilst her people raised cheer after cheer to assure her of their confidence, their loyalty, and their invincible courage.

The enthusiasm of the citizens of London was no idle boast, for in that memorable hour the citizen army of England was giving its heart's blood for the defence of the country.

CHAPTER IV.

How Major Perkins Won the V.C.

At five o'clock that afternoon, Wednesday, May 3rd 1898, the chief coastguard officer at Worthing telegraphed to London, Portsmouth and Dover: "A vast fleet of ships of the line, apparently French and German, are standing in for the shore. They are now about ten miles out at sea. S.W. by S."

Half-an-hour later he wired again: "Fleet distant five miles. Advancing in four lines abreast. Six cables length between each line. Outer lines thirty-six armour-clads. Inner lines forty troopers, Messageries Maritimes and North German Lloyd steamers. Big flotilla of gunboats and torpedo boats ten miles out. Possibly one hundred. Weather calm."

At 6.15 p.m. he sent this message: "Presume this is enemy announced by telegraph from London. Fleet anchored in same formation two miles out. Troopships and liners crowded with troops. Have counted 109 smaller craft. Preparations for landing being made. What shall I do?"

To which the answer was given: "Go to telephone office. Wire is switched on to Horse Guards. Send constant advice of progress of events."

And the first message which was received by Lord Wolseley at the Horse Guards was to the following effect: "A number of flat-bottomed boats, or floats, each containing some two hundred men, have put off from the troopers; and the Volunteers are lining the beach."

The Commander-in-Chief could not help smiling as an aide-de-camp repeated the concluding words to him, but anxious lines appeared in his face as e glanced at his watch, and saw it was only five minutes past seven.

"I hope the Brighton and South-coast people have kept their words, Brabazon," he said to a staff officer who was standing near the fireplace.

"Well, sir, the traffic-manager meant what he said," was the reply. "I heard him tell the driver of the first train, which left Victoria with the Guards at 6.10, that if he got to Worthing within the hour he drew £50 to-morrow, but if he didn't he got the sack."

"What is the exact disposition at this moment?"

"Fourteen South-Western trains, each containing one thousand men, were ready at Aldershot at 5.30, waiting our telephonic orders, and they have since left at regular intervals of five minutes between each, the first starting at 6 p.m. The London, Brighton and South Coast Company are dispatching trains with regulars and volunteers from Victoria, London Bridge, and Clapham Junction as fast as they can fill them. By eight o'clock we should have ten thousand men there, by nine o'clock twenty, and in the early hours of the morning seventy, with two hundred guns."

"I think we estimated that fifty Maxims would be in position on the sea front by 7.30 p.m.?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well," said the Commander-in-Chief, "we can now look into the Commissariat and field transport arrangements. Every man has a day's cooked rations with him, but we must be prepared for developments at that particular locality, although I fail to see how the enemy can possibly effect a landing if the fleet creates a timely diversion."

At that moment the Channel Squadron, under the command of Admiral Lord Charles Beresford, was steaming east from Spithead at the rate of ten knots per hour. The Admiral's pennant was hoisted on board the *Magnificent*, whilst the other vessels under his command were the *Royal Sovereign*, *Blenheim*, *Empress of India*, *Endymion*, *Repulse*, *Resolution*, *Achilles*, and *Agamemnon*. These, with twenty-two torpedo boats and the gunboat *Speedy*, were all the available force at his disposal for immediate action, so skilfully had the enemy planned the time and manner of his attack upon our shores.

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With the exception of one, or possibly three, the most powerful ships in our Navy were in the Mediterranean, in China, in North America, in Australasia, at the Cape—anywhere on the face of the broad waters save in the English Channel. Lord Charles Beresford had received by semaphore the second of the coastguard's telegrams before he gave the signal for departure, and he knew that he had nine warships to oppose thirty-six of equal or superior class, whilst he realised that the proportion of the enemy's smaller craft to those under his command was equally appalling in the mere point of view of numbers.

But hesitation or doubt in his actions or in his heart there was none. No sooner was the fleet under way than another signal was made from the Admiral's ship, and when the words "Remember Nelson" were deciphered, even the strict discipline of the British Navy could not prevent a great cheer bursting forth from every ship in the line.

These things were noted by the anxious watchers on the shore, and when Sir Evely Wood arrived at Worthing at 7.30 p.m. to take command of the defending forces, he found a telegram awaiting him from Lord Wolseley to inform him that naval assistance might be expected shortly after eleven o'clock. The Admiralty officials who made this calculation could not, of course, know what Lord Charles Beresford's exact plans were, but of one thing they were quite certain—he would attack the enemy as soon as ever he could reach them.

When the combined French and German fleets first hove in sight, the quiet little town of Worthing was naturally thrown into a state of intense excitement. The head constable informed the Mayor, and the Mayor sought the advice of the Town Clerk, who recommended that the fire-bell should be rung. This was promptly done, with the result that in ten minutes every soul in Worthing knew that the town was likely to be bombarded forthwith. The man in charge of the fire-engine got steam up, evidently labouring under the impression that he must do something—and in the result he had his salary increased for the act, as the first shell from the enemy's flag-ship struck and fired the Town Hall, which must inevitably have been burnt down were it not for the prompt arrival of the engine.

The local volunteers, to the number of 211, spontaneously gathered with their arms and accoutrements in the principal thoroughfare, and the resident Major, a most worthy and stout linendraper, placed himself at their head, mounted upon a horse that served admirably for the dual purpose of parade and parcels delivery.

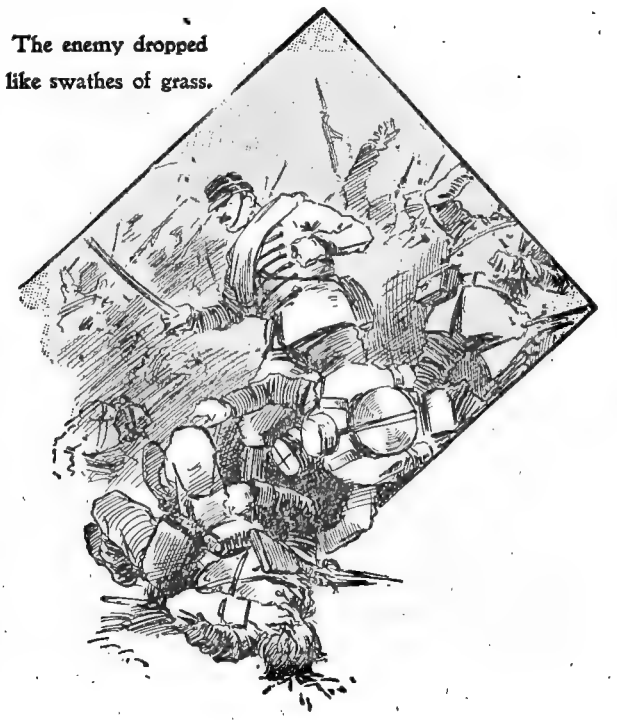
He was busy behind his counter when the strange tidings of imminent invasion reached him. His cheek blanched and his heart beat tumultuously when he rushed upstairs to tell his wife, and that good lady suggested the immediate closing of the shop and a hasty retreat to her father's residence in the country.

But the Major was stout of heart as of body. In a state of high nervous exaltation he sought for his sword and cross belts, saying, as he donned them: "No, Margaret; my place is here. It will be a poor day for England when the first volunteer officer who is called upon to do his duty flinches from the consequences. "Kiss me, my dear. I cannot bear to meet the children, but, God willing, we will all come together again in peace and happiness." And he hurried forth to see to the secure girthing of his horse.

Fortunately there was a very large supply of ammunition on hand with the sergeant-instructor, as the corps was engaged upon its annual target practice, and the men rapidly stuffed their pockets with cartridges until they had over one hundred rounds each.

They then fell in, in two companies, and the Major, Perkins by name, thought it his duty to make a speech, as the circumstances were such as did not, to his knowledge, come within the purview of the Volunteer Regulations.

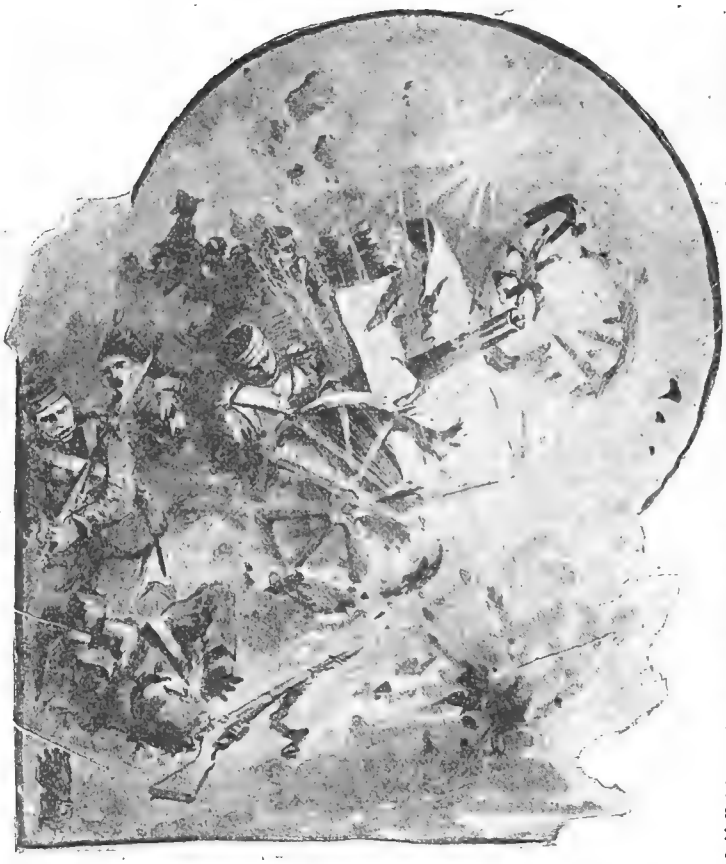
"Comrades," he said, "our worthy Mayor has informed me that war has been declared against us by France and Germany, and we now know that Worthing has been singled out for attack. Whoa, boy, whoa then," for a shell screamed through the air, passed into the Council Chamber of the Town Hall, and burst there with a terrific report, and the Major's mount was tolerably fresh, as Saturday was his hardest day. The Major managed to retain his sword, observing *sotto voce*: "I never *can* sit a horse with a drawn sword in my hand," and continued aloud, "these Frenchmen and Germans are here in their hundreds of thousands, and they do not demand ransom from Worthing, but seek to destroy our town at once. They are worse than highway robbers, as they ask for both our money and our lives. It is our duty, comrades, to resist them to death." (Loud cheers from the crowd, an interlude which the drill instructor utilised to squint down the front rank of one company to see if the dressing was all right). "I am not much good at tactics myself," went on Major Perkins, "but I know what to do here. We must line the shore and let no foreigner set a foot on English soil until he steps over our dead bodies. Companies, form fours—left. By your right, quick march!"



The enemy dropped like swathes of grass.

Arrived on the Marine Parade, the Major and his little host found that six of the enemy's battleships had approached to within a mile and a half of low water mark. They were on the western side of the pier, which they scrupulously refrained from damaging by their subsequent fire, as they expected to find it extremely useful when the active work of disembarkation began. An occasional shot was leisurely fired at the town, not so much by way of serious bombardment as to demonstrate that they were in earnest and would stand no nonsense.

The plan of the allies was now quite apparent. It was their intention to rapidly land sufficient troops and machine guns to hold the outlying portions of Worthing against any possible counter demonstration by the British, until three complete army corps, numbering 150,000 men all told, were concentrated in the locality. This number of troops actually accompanied the expedition.



A murderous fire of shrapnel and small arms rained upon the defenders.

They carried a fortnight's store with them, and by the time a forward movement on London could be undertaken, the French and German commanders estimated that reinforcements of three times the number of the expeditionary force would be at hand, whilst their fighting power would be enormously enhanced by a vast quantity of field ordnance.

Major Perkins extended his men on the beach in single rank with two paces interval. He told them to lie down, to sight their rifles at 400 yards, to aim low, and to concentrate their fire, by order of their section commanders, on particular boats. These dispositions were hardly made before half-a-dozen launches appeared from the seaward side of the six warships, and rapidly steamed, or were rowed, towards the shore, in such fashion as led the onlookers to believe that the occupants expected no resistance.

They were soon b tterly undeceived. Volunteers are, as a rule, excellent marksmen, and bullets poured into the advancing boats at such a rate that the commander of the enemy's advance guard thought it best to retire until the sea front had been vigorously shelled by the batt eships.

At this momentary repulse of the enemy the little defending force set up a great yell of delight, and the stout Major rode up and down the shingle inciting his men to keep up the reputation of Worthing, as though the quiet little watering-place was accustomed to similar murderous proceedings as part of the season's routine.

So far, not an Englishman had been injured, as the fire from the troops in the floats had been uncertain and ineffectual. But now the game was to assume a more desperate character. A perfect tornado of shells swept the sea-front, wrecking every house facing the Channel, and killing and wounding a great number of people of all ages and both sexes, whose curiosity had caused them to watch the progress of events rather than seek safety in flight.

Special attempts were made by the enemy to clear the beach of the unexpected line of defence which had proved its powers so unpleasantly, but it was far from easy to hit men lying down at the water's edge, and the only real living target was the Major on his horse. Both man and animal were in a perfect frenzy of excitement, and appeared to have charmed lives. More than once a time-fuse shrapnel burst right in front of them, but the zone of fire covered by the missiles in the shell left the space round them inviolate, and although appealed to by his subordinate officers to dismount, the Major would not listen to the suggestion.

From his elevated position he could see that a very much larger number of flat-bottomed boats and launches were now gathered behind the ironclads, and when the cannonading ceased, something like 2,000 troops were swiftly ferried towards the shore, with the evident determination to make good their landing this time. Whilst a few of the flotilla made straight for the beach the majority headed towards the pier, and the *feu d'enfer* kept up between the belligerents on the sea-shore prevented the defenders from noting the undisturbed occupation of the pier-head by the enemy.

A volley from the leading boat brought down Major Perkins and his charger, but the Major arose from a cloud of dust, drew his sword, and shrieked in a shrill falsetto, for his natural voice had gone long since: "I'm not dead yet, lads. Give it to 'em."

But the end was seemingly close at hand.

More than half of the Worthing volunteers were killed or wounded, and the survivors were now firing blindly and ineffectively, being mad with the battle fever and dazed with the singing of bullets and the smash of the projectiles against the stones on the beach.

Already some hundreds of Frenchmen had gained the platform of the pier and were forming up to advance into the town, whilst the leading launch was within a few feet of ramming her nose into the gravel beach, when the Major devoted all his remaining energies to one last yell:

"Fix bayonets! Centre cl se! Double!" and he jumped into the surf, brandishing his sword like a maniac. A big German officer leapt from the bow of the boat to meet him, but his heel turned on an uneven boulder, his lunge missed, and the Major hit him such a hearty whack with the flat of his sword that the German fell stunned into the sea, and was quietly but speedily drowned.

But now a fierce roar of many voices came from behind the straggling group of volunteers. Ere anyone had realised what was happening, two companies of the Grenadiers Guards flung themselves into three of the enemy's launches and gutted them with the bayonet as terriers might clear out rats under like conditions.

Two more companies deployed to left and right of the pier on the Marine Parade, and poured a hailstorm of lead into the advancing French column and their comrades in the boats, and, when the ornamental ironwork gates at the entrance of the pier had been smashed down, a couple of Maxims were run into position, with the result that the enemy dropped like swathes of grass before the sweep of a scythe.

A second time had the attack failed, utterly and disastrously.

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Sir Evelyn Wood had now arrived and assumed control of affairs. The 1st Battalion of the Grenadier Guards had been conveyed from Victoria to Worthing, fifty-nine and a half miles, in fifty-eight minutes, and one of the Tommies accurately expressed the feelings of himself and his comrades when he said subsequently that he would sooner "stand and be blazed at for a month of Sundays by forty thousand bloomin' Frenchmen than do that little trip again."

The driver of the train described the journey as "a toss up between fifty quid and Kingdom Come," while the guard, a sober, steady man, was responsible for the statement that he only once in his life wished he was drunk—"when we was crossin' them facin' points at Keymer Junction."

Five minutes later the General and staff, with the 4th Battalion of the King's Royal Rifle Corps, better known as the 60th, reached the station from Aldershot. Sir Evelyn Wood, by galloping bare-backed on a cab-horse to the parade, gained the scene of action in time to witness Major Perkins' last gallant attempt to hurl back the tide of invasion.

During the momentary lull that followed the retreat of the second flotilla, he sent for the Major and said: "If we are both alive to-morrow I shall recommend you for the Victoria Cross, and shall ask the Commander-in-Chief to gazette you as a full Colonel in her Majesty's regular forces. You have behaved most gallantly."

But Perkins could make no answer. He had quite lost his voice. He bowed respectfully, and two great tears coursed down his cheeks.

Twelve-pounders, machine guns, and relays of troops were now pouring through the town from the station, and night had commenced to close in. It took the discomforted enemy some time to gain the shelter of the warship's guns, and the General seized the welcome respite to plant the Maxims and field artillery on the shingle, whilst he ordered the lamps on the parade to be lighted in order to mislead the enemy's gunners. Electric searchlights lit up the scene from the ironclads, many buildings in the town were in flames, and when the shell-fire recommenced it was seen that the men-of-war had widened their intervals considerably in order to concentrate their fire-zone, and several gunboats had approached much nearer the shore than the big ships dared to venture, pouring in a perfectly demoniacal hail of lead.

Considering its volume and intensity, it did not do such wholesale damage to the defenders as might have been expected. The low position of our artillery and Maxims, added to the uncertainty of the electric beams, brilliant though they were, served to disconcert the aim of the gunners, who were themselves the object of a terrific fire belching forth from a very wide expanse of the seashore.

Our losses were heavy, but they were more than made up by the constant accessions of strength in guns, men, and ammunition. The station-master afterwards received a decoration from the Queen for the masterly way in which he kept his station clear of empty trains, using both platforms and goods sidings for debarkation, and returning the empties along the up and down lines respectively towards Brighton and Goring.

At ten o'clock another attempt to effect a landing was made, but the reception given was so warm that the attacking boats were never closer than three hundred yards from the beach. Sir Evelyn Wood took advantage of the retreating tide to move his guns and men lower down and thus again upset the enemy's range.

This third failure induced a further change of tactics on the part of the combined squadron. The fire on both sides slackened off until near eleven o'clock, when the ball was again opened by twenty ironclads, and something like sixty gunboats and torpedo boats. The smaller craft boldly steamed in until they were barely two cables' length from the shore, and forthwith a murderous fire of shrapnel and small arms rained upon the defenders. The reply on our side was undaunted, but it naturally became more uncertain. Every second man in the fighting line was hit in a few minutes, guns were dismounted, Maxims smashed into fragments, and stones and *débris* hurled in showers over the whole of the Parade.

The General did not dare to weaken his extended front by withdrawing the men to seek shelter, as it was evident that a tremendous attack would shortly be delivered from the numerous flotilla of boats now gathering behind the vessels.

Fiercer and fiercer grew the fusillade, shells hurled through the air screaming like lost spirits, bullets clanged in masses against the ruined houses, and some ten thousand troops crowded into an innumerable company of boats of all shapes and sizes, were about to make a determined dash for the shore, when a sudden outburst of big guns from the sea, a series of tremendous crashes and explosions, and a rapid diversion of the electric search lights towards the south, caused an immediate cessation of fire from both parties.

The British Fleet had arrived upon the scene.

(To be continued.)

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The Evening Bell.

HARK! Do you hear that bell? It is *las animas*, the bell of souls. Every evening it rings, and it tears my soul! You see this white hair, these worn features? They have not been blanched and chiselled by age, for I am not yet old. They are the hieroglyphics of a terror, an agony too profound for words. Yet listen. I will try to tell you.

A little time ago, I was a happy wife and mother. We lived near Aguasdulces.

We had a little land, and we were the parents of three children, two fine boys and a girl—my darling, beautiful fifteen-year-old Teresita. Yes, we were very happy.

Then came this lamentable rebellion. My husband used to shake his head as he sat smoking in the verandah in the evening, and say:

"Never will I raise my hand against the king."

We heard the echo of the clash of arms from afar. We knew of plantations devastated and villages laid waste, but we had little fear in our neutral ground.

One day some of the negroes came running up, excitedly, crying out that a detachment of troops had suddenly appeared before the mill belonging to Don Fulgencio Casilda, and were attacking it.

Later, the steward of the estate, followed by several negroes, appeared at our door. They were wild with fright. They said the troops had murdered the señores and ransacked the place. They had destroyed everything they could lay hands upon, and were now setting fire to the fields and buildings.

My husband gave them food, but he entreated them to fly farther up the hills lest the presence of our premises should bring us into danger, and they did so. A panic of terror was upon me. I entreated my husband to take our children and fly to the forests, but he refused.

The event bore out my apprehensions. About dark a small party of cavalry appeared coming up the road towards our house. My husband went out with extended hands to greet them. He was met by a line of lifted rifle muzzles.

"Do not shoot!" he cried out. "I am a neutral!"

The only answer was a crackling volley. Without a cry he fell forward upon his face.

The next moments are a hideous confusion in my mind. Moved with the instinct for concealment—flight was now impossible—I hurried my children in to a small rear chamber and locked the door. There we cowered, trembling.

Soon there was a knocking at the door and a cry of "Open!" Then, as we did not stir, the lock was burst in, and the captain, with several men, jumped into the apartment.

"*Hola!*" he shouted grimly. "Some more rebels! Give them their medicine too."

I had shrunk into the farthest corner, but as I saw the flash of bayonets over my little boys' heads I sprang forward screaming:

"Would you slay my innocent children?"

The captain faced me with a brutal laugh He was about to address me insultingly when he caught sight of Teresita cowering behind me.

"*Caramba!* What is this? Bring that creature out to the light. She is a veritable houri. Let her alone. She is for me. As for the old one——" He shrugged his shoulders.

But Teresita sprang suddenly and clasped me about the neck.

"If you kill mamma you will have to kill me first."

"Oh, well, never mind," he retorted with a villainous laugh, "let them be. There is plenty of time. Just now I am dying of hunger. See what there is to be found to eat in this miserable hole."

They dragged my boys away, and I never saw them again.

They left us for a brief space, but posted a sentry outside. We could hear his measured pacing to and fro. For a time terror deprived me of all power of thought, but as the moments passed a ray of hope sprang up within me.

We could hear the shouts of the men in the kitchen, and knew they were eating and carousing. The pacing of the sentry had ceased, and instead we heard a raucous noise, by which we divined that he might have fallen asleep. Furthermore, the night had fallen, and it had grown very dark.

There was a window in our room which looked upon a little back yard by the stables. Here all was quiet. Moving with the footfalls of cats, we took the sheets from the bed, knotted them together and secured one end to a ring in the window jam used for an awning.

Teresita slipped out first and slid down. Then I climbed out, I know not how, and followed her.

Up at the back of the plantation there was a grove, the edge, in fact, of a little forest which covered the top of the ridge. We gained this, and when we found ourselves among the tree trunks, we dared to breathe once more. There was an obscure little path over the ridge into the valley beyond, and, striking this presently, we travelled it all night.

Daybreak found us on the farther edge, footsore, exhausted—for women in Cuba are no walkers—but with hearts full of thankfulness for our comparative safety. Below us we could see occasional houses and the dusty trail of a road winding amid the verdure. A sudden idea came to me.

"We will go to San Niceto, my darling," I said. "Your father has an old uncle there, a tobacconist. He will help us."

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Teresita was softly crying.

We ate some bananas which were growing wild in that place, and then we lay down among the trees to sleep. Sleep greatly refreshed us, and in the evening we started once more, and thus we went down into San Niceto.

The town was full of soldiers, which much disquieted me, but I need not have been alarmed, for we were both so worn, so dirty, and so tattered that few would have looked at us twice.

We were, however, taken before the authorities, and required to give an account of ourselves. I dared not tell my true story, but represented myself as a widow living beyond the hills who had come to the town to visit an uncle, and they let us go.

But a fresh disappointment awaited us. When we hunted up my husband's uncle, the tobacconist, we found he was dead. Señora Antonia, the old woman who had acted as his housekeeper, told us that he had been carried off a short time before very suddenly by a pneumonia. She was a very talkative, wheedling, sympathetic old soul, and presently offered us a room. As we knew not where to go we took it.

I tried to obtain work, but there was little to be had. I had a few poor little rings, which I sold for a trifle, and we managed to exist.

Señora Antonia was very sociable—too sociable, indeed—for she dropped in frequently for a chat, and was never weary of asking us questions. I only learnt too late that all she cared for was money.

The town was always stirring with soldiers coming and going, full of noise and insolent ways. I kept my Teresita at home by day, and only allowed her to go out of an evening with me.

One day when I was not feeling well, I let her go with old Señora Antonia. The old woman professed a great friendship for my child and was always petting and cajoling her. I do not know why I was so foolish as to trust her, but after the anguish and weariness we had suffered I was glad to lean a little upon this friendship, the only one offered me.

Teresita returned from church excited and distraught.

"*Mamaita!*" she exclaimed, "I have seen him!"

"Him? Who?"

"That man, that devil, the captain who drove us from our home."

My heart seemed to stand still.

"Are you sure?" I questioned.

"Oh, yes. Sure! I felt his bold, bad eyes upon me as we were passing through the door, and I ran, ran, all the way home."

"You will stay at home night and day," I declared. I could not sleep at all that night. A thousand apprehensions tormented me.

Very early the next morning I went down to the market to get some vegetables. As I entered I beheld a man far off talking with a woman, and I perceived the glitter of money which passed between them. The woman was our hostess, Señora Antonia; the man was the big Captain.

Sick at heart, almost staggering, I crept home to my child, and clasping her to me, wept over her. We spent the day devising plans of flight, but none was feasible.

Several times we heard Señora Antonia rap at the door, but we made no reply, and she went away. Late in the evening she came again.

"Open, dear Señora," she said, coaxingly. "I have here a beautiful supper for the child."

Hunger is a great compeller. My child was exhausted with agitation and want of food, and so was I. I crept to the door and opened it a crack.

Instantly it was pushed wide, and two soldiers roughly entered. One of them seized me, clapped a hand over my mouth to smother my screams, while the other dragged my child hastily away.

I cannot remember clearly what followed. I struggled, I bit, I tore at my tormentor, but he overcame me, bound and gagged me, and, leaving me prone, quitted the room, locking the door behind him. My bonds were not tight, and after a time I loosened them sufficiently to crawl to the door and beat upon it with my hands, calling incessantly upon my child and upon Señora Antonia.

I must have sunk down at last senseless, for the next I knew I was lying upon my bed and Señora Antonia was pouring something down my throat. I used my first consciousness to revile and to drive her from me.

All day I lay upon that couch, exhausted and benumbed. I slept much, too, for my lacerated spirit seemed wrenched to a point where a sort of coma supervenes. I seemed to feel nothing acutely, but only hoped I might soon die.

Later I arose and ate a little food, for I began to reflect that I must rouse myself to go and find my child, although I knew not where. Somehow a little fresh courage came to me, and I lay down more easily to sleep.

In the night I was roused by someone pushing open the door and rushing into the apartment. The moon, which was streaming in through the window, revealed the figure of my child.

"Teresita!" I exclaimed, mad with joy, and flung myself upon her, but she pushed me frantically away.

"Do not touch me!" she gasped in hoarse, strange tones. "Do not touch me!"

I drew back in consternation and contemplated her.

Her eyes were bloodshot and staring, her visage pale and fixed into such an expression of hideous and ferocious horror as surely no girl's countenance ever wore before. I thought her mad.

"*Angel mia!*" I faltered.

"I have killed him," she said, still in the same unnatural voice. "He was a demon, and I have killed him."

Then I perceived that her hands and her garments were dripping with fresh blood. Involuntarily I recoiled, but she seemed not to care. Desperation had hardened her and changed her nature.

"Let me sleep," she continued. "I must sleep. I am dropping from fatigue."

She flung herself upon the bed whence I had just risen and, strange to say, sank at once into a heavy slumber, while I stood in a petrification of despair and watched her.

Ah, well! There is little more to relate. Of course they came and apprehended her at once. There was no trial. Indeed none was needed, for she did not deny what she had done. They did not even give her time for shriving, but took her at once to the plaza, stripped her and hanged her to the irons of a lamp, just as the bell was ringing out *las animas!*

"She must be made an example of," the commandant declared.

Ah, Heaven! Are there no others of whom an example should be made, no pitiless scourgers of the land, no brutes masquerading in the shape of men and making a mockery of the names of law and justice?

EDWARD MOORE.

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The Wooden Case.

Edward Richardson, the explorer, was my life-long friend, college chum, and now my honoured guest.

At college, Ned went in for dead and hidden things, archæology, and all that: and, after absorbing all that the best schools of this country and other countries could teach on those lines, he started in, digging here, prodding there, until he had punctured holes in the earth's crust in nearly every country on the globe.

Now, after years of this sort of thing, he was back to his native city, with a hat full of medals and decorations, and his fame as an explorer and an archæologist established throughout civilisation.

We had just returned from a dinner given in his honour by a scientific body, and had adjourned to the library for a smoke and a chat before retiring.

Our talk so far had referred to his little speech concerning his latest and most important discoveries in Egypt, and to the effect it had produced upon his hearers.

And now, to my great surprise, he acknowledged that he had intentionally omitted facts of importance bearing upon his work! To put it mildly, it was an eye-opener, and I could only look the astonishment I felt.

After a few thoughtful puffs, Ned said:

"Frank, what really did happen is so strange, so inconceivable, that were I to tell the story to the world, I should be laughed at and told that I lied, or was crazy.

"Look here," he exclaimed, throwing off coat and collar and uncovering the upper portion of his brawny chest and shoulders: "here's a bit of evidence of the truth of my tale, that I always carry with me."

I looked, and on his throat, underneath the heavy beard, I beheld a lot of scars which extending downward, spread out into rows that covered every inch of the body exposed to view. It looked as if some sharp-toothed instrument, like a rake, had gouged out the flesh, or as though the man had been seared by hot irons.

"Good heavens!" I cried. "What beast or thing did that?"

"Aye, you may well put it that way," replied Ned, resuming his garments and seat: "it was a Thing, the most horrible that ever existed on this earth.

"I told you this evening," he went on, "that I had set out to investigate a small pyramid which stood in the desert, a mile or two from the oasis that had been my base of operations while exploring in that part of Egypt. I explained how we spent weeks digging and sounding before success rewarded us; how we finally broke into the tomb underneath the pyramid, and discovered the mummies, and the stores of jewels and ornaments, which proved that the bodies had lain there, undisturbed by mortal hand, since the days they were buried—six thousand years before. All these things occurred precisely as I stated. There was nothing here to conceal.

"You also heard of the attempt made to steal some of our treasures from the building in which they were temporarily stored; how one of my men on guard at the time was murdered, and how I, while seeking traces of the murderer in the camp of a band of roving Arabs, was attacked in the tent of the sheik, and forced to kill that individual to save my own life. That part of the story was true enough, so far as it went, but the most important facts were omitted. What actually did occur was this:

"After working for weeks on the job, and gaining nothing but hard labour for our pains, I became discouraged, and one evening I announced to the men that if the next day or two brought no better luck I would abandon the undertaking.

"I also told them that, in order to be in good trim for what might be our last attempt, they should do no work next day, and suggested that they should go to headquarters at once and take a rest. They were glad enough to have a holiday, after working as they had done.

"Soon all hands were on their way to the oasis, whence my party, with the exception of the native labourers, put up when off duty.

"I remained in camp, and early next morning made a tour of the diggings. I examined every hole and sounding, made careful measurements, and tried to think out some new plan of operation that would yield tangible results. Finally I returned to my tent and was about to make a personal search in front of it, when I happened to see far out on the desert what my field-glass showed me was a caravan. It was a small affair—a dozen camels, loaded, and as many horsemen. It was headed for the oasis, and would come no nearer to the pyramid.

"As I stood watching the travellers, a horseman, riding ahead, left the column, and followed closely by what seemed, at that distance, a child, also mounted

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rode rapidly towards me, the rest continuing on their way. When they got within several rods of me the pair pulled up, and the man, dismounting, stood quietly while his little companion proceeded to the pyramid and passed behind out of sight, followed by the riderless horse.

"Then the stranger walked forward until but a few yards separated us, when he stopped, and, instead of the usual salaam, made a profound bow. He uttered not a word, but stood with arms folded, as if waiting for me to address him. He was very tall, straight as a spear, and wore the ordinary long white garments of the desert tribes.

"Irritated by the man's silence, I finally cried out, in Arabic: 'Who are you, and what do you want?'

"At this my visitor came up close to me, replying as he did so: 'Who I am matters little; what I want, you will give me in return for the service I shall render you.'

"I was astonished, but ere I could speak, he continued: 'I know you are Edward Richardson, the explorer. I know what you expect to find here, and how you have worked, without avail, until you have become discouraged. How I know these things, concern me alone. What concerns you is the fact that I, and I alone, can show you how to enter the tomb, which is here, as you surmise, and I will do so, provided you give me my choice of what you may find in it.'

"Although amazed at the man's knowledge of me and my movements, and distrusting him instinctively, I determined to force his hand, if possible, and to find out his demands and what he proposed to do.

"Inviting him to sit down on a block of stone at my side, I said:

"'You seem to know so much, and to be so powerful, why haven't you opened this tomb yourself?'

"'Because,' he replied, 'to do so requires engineering skill and mechanical appliances, which it is impossible for me to obtain hereabouts.'

"'What do you require in payment for your services?' was my next query.

"'A mummy,' he replied.

"'Why, these are the things I am most anxious to find myself, and you may demand what is of the greatest value to me,' I said.

"'Listen,' said the man, 'you will find bodies of kings and queens who lived at a time of which man has no record. These shall be yours, together with all the jewels and ornaments buried with them. You will also discover a case in which is a body, but no treasure. This case and contents are all I ask, and I swear there is nothing in them that would be of value to you. As a guarantee that I am not trifling or trying to deceive you, take these.' Saying which, he drew out a small pouch, from which he poured into my hands a dozen or more of the finest diamonds I ever saw. 'If I fail you in any way,' he continued, 'or you do not find everything as I say, these shall be yours.'

"To be brief, I agreed to the proposal, the Arab accepting my verbal promise to fulfil the contract.

"'Now,' said he, when the preliminaries were settled—and here is where the incomprehensible part of the affair begins—'I will fulfill my part of the agreement.'

"With this he gave a shrill whistle, following upon which the little fellow came out from behind the pyramid, and, with the other horse by his side, rode up to us and dismounted. Making a low bow to me, he stepped in front of the other and gazed, without a word, into his face, as if awaiting a command.

"I now saw that, instead of being a child, the newcomer was a dwarf, twenty years old, or thereabouts. He was a handsome, dark-eyed little fellow, with a red fez and zouave-like outfit that became him well. That he was uncommonly active and powerful, I had reason to thank my stars later on.

"At a word in some strange dialect, the dwarf detached from the Arab's saddle, and handed to him a scimitar, the hilt and scabbard of which were covered with some scaly material that I afterwards found to be the skin of a snake.

"Another word or two in the same unknown tongue, and the little man drew back and faced the big one. As he did so, I caught a look of aversion on his face, and his eyes gleamed as if with hatred or defiance. The Arab noticed the look and returned it with a ugly scowl and a growl that sounded like a threat.

"Rising from his seat, he unsheathed the blade, and the next moment the dwarf seemed to be standing in the midst of a rain of fire. The Arab was laying about him with his weapons, and such sword play, I'm free to say, I never saw before, and never shall again while I live.

"The exhibition ceased as suddenly as it began. The dwarf stood with arms folded, and a queer, far-away look in his eyes. The Arab gazed at him a moment, and then, tearing the covering from the hilt, held that part of the scimitar to his face.

"The hilt was of gold, beautifully chased and set with gems. On the end was an immense diamond that blazed in the sunlight like flame, and this was waved slowly before the dwarf's eyes until the lids dropped and he seemingly slept.

"As the Arab sheathed his sword and replaced the covering on the hilt, he said: 'Ali grows rebellious and objects to serving me; he must be disciplined.' Then, producing a sheet of paper and pencil, he laid them on the stone he had vacated, and, stepping in front of his subject, he gave what seemed to be a command in a loud, imperious tone, and in the same outlandish tongue he had used before.

"In a few moments the dwarf made a reply in a muffled voice that sounded as if it came from underground.

"Then, as though interpreting, the Arab said:

"'He tells me a great rock closes the entrance to the tunnel leading to the tomb, but he has passed through it.'

"For the next few minutes not a word was spoken. Then came a little cry from the dwarf, followed by a few sentences in a broken, gasping voice, as of one utterly exhausted.

"At another command, he staggered to the stone, and seizing the pencil, he rapidly drew on the paper what looked like the ground plan of a building. A lot of writing followed, and when this was completed the Arab handed me what turned out to be an accurate plan of the tomb and tunnel, with full directions for entering them.

"As Ali finished, he fell over in a dead faint; but a few drops from the vial, which the Arab held to his lips, soon restored him. Then the strange pair mounted and set off towards the oasis, and that was the last I saw of them for some days.

"In the evening I rode back to camp, where I learnt that the newcomers had pitched their tents on the outskirts of the oasis, and seemed a quiet, well disposed lot.

"I told my associates that the sheik had visited me

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and given me certain directions for finding and entering the tomb, for which, if they proved correct, he was to receive an ordinary mummy, in case any such were found.

"Not until we broke into the tomb and laid profane hands upon its contents, did the sheik put in an appearance at the workings.

"On that momentous day he came, bright and early, accompanied by four of his people, big, solemn-looking fellows. Seeking me out, he obtained permission to enter the tomb with me, and while there, no movement of ours, as we opened sarcophagi and took mummies, jewels, and what not, escaped his watchful eye.

"For a long time there was no sign of the wooden case, but when most of the things had been removed he called attention to a crack in the wall in front of him. A few blows of a pick disclosed a niche, the front of which had been walled up. Upright within stood a covered box, and in this we found, as the Arab had fore-told, the body of a dwarf.

"It was that of a man with immensely broad shoulders, and arms reaching nearly to his knees. The face was hideous, and a ferocious smile had drawn the thin lips apart, disclosing teeth sharp, and gleaming like those of a beast.

"Strange to say, the body was not swathed in bandages, as mummies always are, but was clothed in a loose garment of some peculiar stuff that bore our rough handling without a break.

"Great bunches of muscle covered the frame, and nowhere was there an opening, or, in fact, an indication that an internal organ had been removed, as is always done in the case of mummies.

"The body, with its stiffened limbs, was like that of one in a cataleptic fit or trance, and represented, as I supposed, some strange and wonderful process of embalming, of which this was the only specimen in existence.

"The head rested on an oblong block, covered with a piece of the same material of which the garment was made, and on this odd pillow the Arab's eyes were fastened with the most intense eagerness. Before I could lay a hand on it, he had replaced the lid of the box, saying as he did so:

"'I suppose I may take this now? You have seen how insignificant it is, and I desire to get it to my tent at once.'

"Reluctantly I gave my consent, and his own men carried the case to the surface and placed it in a cart I lent him to convey his prize to camp.

"An hour or two after they left, we found in the niche, under some rubbish, what I took to be a block of bronze. It was about twice the size of a common brick, quite heavy, and on every side of it was inlaid with gold in strange designs.

"I sent it up to be put with the other stuff in the storeroom, and shortly afterwards was told that the sheik was above, asking to see me privately. When, at my request, he joined me in the tomb, he was greatly excited, and his first words were:

"'I have lost a small bronze block belonging to that case; have you seen it about here?'

"'My friend,' I said, 'in return for your services I agreed to give you a certain case and contents. Have I fulfilled my promise?'

"'Yes,' he replied, 'but——'

"'All bronze blocks,' I put in, 'and everything else outside the case belong to me, and I shall keep them.'

"At this the sheik said not another word, but, with a murderous scowl on his face, turned and left the pit.

"Upon quitting work for that day, I went to the storeroom and hid the block of bronze under a pile of tools. Later, when my assistants had gone back to headquarters and the labourers had settled down for the night I called in Sam, my African servant, and one of the native labourers, an intelligent, trustworthy Arab, and arranged with them for guarding the storehouse during the night. I was to take the first and longest watch, Sam the next, and the native the last, which would end when the camp was astir in the morning.

"This plan was carried out, and nothing occurred while either myself or Sam was on duty. When the Arab took his post, I examined the building inside and out, but found the block in its place and everything in proper condition.

"Upon resuming my bunk, where I had slept like a top through Sam's watch, I found that sleep had deserted me, and for more than an hour I tossed about, unable to close my eyes. At last I dropped off into a doze, from which, a few minutes later, I woke with a start. Something had disturbed me, I knew not what, but a faint echo seemed to ring in my ears as of a voice calling for help.

"Jumping up, I made for the storehouse at the top of my speed.

"The moon had not gone down, so that objects near by were fairly visible.

"When close to the building, I saw what brought me up standing.

"The door stood wide open, and someone was moving about inside.

"Approaching close to the opening, I called out the man's name. There was no reply, and the noise within ceased.

"As I stood there, peering into the dark room, there was a sudden scrambling, a horrible, snarling cry, and out of the doorway came something on all fours which, leaping past me like a flash, was out of sight almost before I could move.

"Recovering my wits, which, I confess, were scared out of me for the moment, I was inside the room and at the hiding place with lantern at once.

"The block was gone!

"A hasty examination showed that nothing else was disturbed, and that the door had been forced by pressure from without; the broken lock, and screws torn from the wood, indicating that extraordinary force had been applied.

"Outside, lying on his back close to the building, I found the watchman. The poor fellow was dead. His neck was broken, his face distorted with fear and horror, and upon his throat were deep scratches, from which blood was still flowing.

"Arousing the camp, I had the body taken to the hospital tent, and explained to the men that their comrade had been murdered by a burglar who failed to secure anything of value.

"What it was that did the deed I could not imagine, but I felt assured that the sheik was the responsible party, and determined to visit him at an early hour.

"Soon after sunrise I was standing in front of my tent when, to my surprise, Ali, the dwarf, rode up at a furious gallop. Without dismounting or uttering a word, he thrust into my hand a folded paper and, turning, was off again like a shot. The paper contained these word:

"'The sheik sleeps, and I have stolen away. He has

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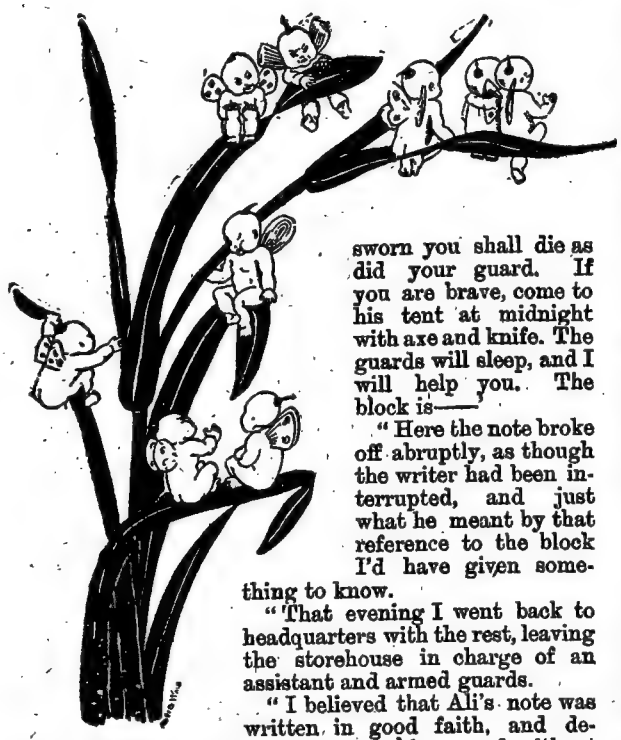

sworn you shall die as did your guard. If you are brave, come to his tent at midnight with axe and knife. The guards will sleep, and I will help you. The block is——

"Here the note broke off abruptly, as though the writer had been interrupted, and just what he meant by that reference to the block I'd have given something to know.

"That evening I went back to headquarters with the rest, leaving the storehouse in charge of an assistant and armed guards.

"I believed that Ali's note was written in good faith, and determined to act as he advised, but alone, and without the knowledge of any of my people.

"Shortly before midnight I was in the vicinity of the Sheik's tent, which stood near the edge of the oasis, its entrance facing the desert.

"As I cautiously approached the door, the moonlight enabled me to see, stretched on the ground in front of it the body of a man, clasping a long gun. Already one of Ali's statements was verified. The guard slept, and soundly, too, I could see that.

"Just then the Sheik's voice rang out in a sort of wild chant, and I prepared for action.

"Securing the broad-bladed hatchet I had brought with me, to my wrist, by means of a leather loop on the handle, and carrying a stout hunting knife in the other hand, I stepped over the sleeper and peered into the tent.

"A tall screen in front of the door cut off my view completely. Then I crawled through the opening and stood behind the screen.

"Cutting a slit in this with my knife, I could see that rugs and skins covered the ground, and screens stood at the sides, and at the opposite end of the tent, which was large and oblong in shape. In the centre was a table, draped in black, and in front of this, with his back towards me, stood the Arab.

"He wore a black robe that reached from his neck to his heels, and in his right hand was a short, black rod, which he waved from side to side in unison with the chant.

"On the table I could see the bronze block, and beside it lay the beautiful scimitar, its hilt glittering in the rays of the lamp that hung from the top of the tent.

"Neither Ali nor the case was in sight, but I felt confident that the dwarf was near, ready to lend a hand if necessary.

"With weapons ready for instant use, I moved towards the table, and my hand was already on the block before the Arab knew I was there.

"A startled cry fell from his lips as he saw me. His hand flew to the sword, and, quicker than I can tell it, he aimed a blow which, had it reached me, would have split me to the shoulders.

"A leap aside, however, saved me, and before he could straighten himself, I dropped the hatchet and sent in a right-hander that nearly lifted him off his feet. He recovered himself, though, like a prize-fighter, and, with blood streaming from his nose and mouth, he sprang at me again.

"But just then a gleam of light flashed by me and I heard a dull, crunching sound. The Arab's rush was suddenly checked. His sword wavered an instant, and then fell to the ground. The hand that held it dropped and closed convulsively upon something that protruded from his breast. It was instantly withdrawn, and with it, the fingers already stiffening round the haft, came a long, broad-bladed knife, dripping with blood. A dark stream flowed and flowed over the long robe.

"The Arab swayed to and fro several times; then, with a gurgling sound, he fell to the ground, dead.

"As if in response to the cry, and before I could turn to see where the knife came from, I heard a savage snarl, and something sprang upon me from behind. A pair of long brown arms were clasped round my neck, and instantly my clothing was being torn to shreds and my flesh gashed by fingers that were more like claws of steel.

"So sudden and fierce was the attack that I staggered forward and would have fallen, had not my assailant's backward tug kept me on my feet.

"My throat seemed to be the point aimed at, and in its mad efforts to reach this, the beast, or whatever it was, soon had my shoulders laid bare and channels dug into my flesh, from which the blood ran in streams.

"I am a powerful man, as you know, Frank, but in the grasp of this fiend I was as helpless as a child. Try as I might, I could not shake him off, and my utmost exertions failed to prevent his inhuman gouging and tearing.

"I had dropped my knife when first attacked, and all I could do was to hold my head down to protect my throat, and make an occasional futile stroke with the hatchet.

"Soon I began to grow weak from loss of blood.

"I wondered vaguely what had become of Ali, and, in a voice scarcely audible, I called upon him for help.

"As I did so, my head went back with a jerk and the sharp claws sank into my throat.

"Death in a frightful form was very close to me when Ali's shout of encouragement reached my ears, and I felt rather than heard, quick blows falling upon the body of my assailant.

"The pressure on my throat relaxed, the terrible arms dropped from my shoulders, and I was free.

"I fell against the table gasping for breath, but still conscious that another struggle was going on near me and that Ali might be needing help as I had.

"Pulling myself together, I turned to take a hand, when, as I am a living man, Frank, I found myself gazing upon the mummy we had resurrected!

"There was no mistaking that powerful, stumpy body, or those features, now distorted with rage, and more horrible than ever.

Just now it was facing me, making short, savage rushes at Ali, who, knife in hand, eluded the attacks

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with wonderful agility, driving the blade into the Thing at its every attempt to reach him.

"Stiff with horror and unable to stir, I watched the fight until Ali, in avoiding a vicious rush, slipped, and, ere he could recover himself, was in the clutches of the monster.

"With one long arm it hugged the little fellow close to its body, and the free hand was already at his throat before the power to move returned to me.

"Then, staggering forward, I raised the heavy hatchet and, with all my strength in me, I brought it down squarely upon the top of the ugly head.

"I heard the crash and saw the blade eat its way through the skull to the neck, and then I fainted.

"The next thing I knew I was lying on a pile of rugs and Ali was busy patching me up. So potent were his remedies and treatment that in a little while I was on my feet nearly as strong as ever, and feeling only a trifling pain from the injuries.

"'Where is the mummy?' was my first query.

"'I killed the infernal thing and the men are now burying it,' Ali replied.

"'You and I this night have rid the world of two monsters,' I said.

"'How the Sheik put life into the Thing, I know not. He had strange powers. He knew yon tomb existed, and that in it was the body of one who, ages ago, had been high priest and mighty magician. He knew that with the priest were buried his profoundest secrets—those by which he controlled the elements and even life itself.

"'He knew, moreover,' continued Ali, 'by what dread means the priest had preserved his trance-like existence through all these centuries, and had acquired the formula by which life could be restored to the body.

"'Many of his mysteries he learnt through me by various unholy methods, one of which you witnessed; but his prying into things forbidden was hateful to me, and I often refused to aid him, until beaten into submission.

"'The Sheik was aware that the priest's secrets were contained in a bronze casket, and this, he believed, was in the case with the body. In the thing under the priest's head he was sure he beheld the object of his search, and when he found this to be nothing but a block of wood, he was mad with rage and disappointment. He knew, then, that the casket must be in your possession, and your refusal to give it to him did not tend to lessen his anger. So furious, indeed, was he, that he beat me cruelly, and swore he would get the casket if he had to kill you all.

"'I then swore that I would kill him for beating me.

"'At night the miracle was performed that let loose the evil one, whose first act was to murder your guard and bring back the box.

"'This night he would have opened it and disclosed its mysteries to the Sheik, who, once master of them, would have made the other his, else taken his life for good.

"'Here is the casket,' continued Ali, handing me what I had hitherto thought to be a block of bronze. 'Take it, but never dream of looking inside. The contents would make one who knew, able to secure and use the most powerful of all created beings; but woe to him who would handle them or even attempt to open the casket, without proper knowledge which is now lost for ever. I would bury the unholy thing where none would ever find it, were I not sure it would be safe with you.

"'Take this also, as a token of my regard and as a slight return for saving my life,' and he put into my hand the magnificent scimitar, sheathed, and it its snakes-skin covering.

"'The Sheik,' he went on, ignoring my objections to receiving so valuable a gift, 'claimed to be my father. He lied; but as I am recognised as his son by my tribe, I shall succeed him, and all his possessions are mine.'

"Here I endeavoured to force upon him the diamonds left by the Sheik as a pledge; but Ali refused them, saying that as the Sheik had broken his agreement, the jewels were rightfully mine.

"As to the death of the sheik, that had to be explained, he said, to his people as the result of an attempt of the Arab's to murder me; and having been a cruel task-master, his death caused great joy rather than grief.

"Already the body was being prepared for removal, and in a few hours, the boy explained, they would start for home.

"Where that home was, or how reached, however, Ali obstinately refused to tell me, and from the moment when I rode away from the door of his tent, where he stood motionless, watching me until he faded out of sight, I have never seen or heard from this saviour of my life.

"Such wounds as I was bound to show, I easily accounted for as the result of my fight with the Arab, my version of which was the more readily accepted as that night the strangers disappeared, leaving no trace behind them.

"Thanks to Ali's ointment, my injuries soon healed, and to this day, Frank, you are the only one to whom I have ever told their history.

"Do you wonder at my silence?"

T. GILLINGHAM.

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SAVING A LOVER.

It was very quiet, very tranquil, in the barracks that day, and from the deserted grounds, where only a solitary sentry or two paced up and down, none of the usual barrack-room talk, laughter, or singing could be heard. For every soldier, bandman, and officer had been called to the officers' police quarters, where a fellow soldier was being tried for his life by the court-martial.

It was during the revolutionary days, when power was vested in the hands of the military. They had the right to say whether or not Private Santiago Moreno was guilty of murder, and whether, in payment thereof, he should die.

No women were present in the grim, fortress-like quarters; only the soldiers who stood in silent, stern rows round the room. On the dais sat the colonel, the major and some lesser officers; fronting them, straight and erect, with shoulders thrown back, stood the prisoner, Santiago Moreno.

He was a good-looking fellow, and the star on his breast showed that he had received credit for bravery. Not a flicker of an eyelid, not a movement, showed what he felt; there was not even a tremour when the colonel, after long and grave discussion, at last stood up, with the other officers grouped about him, and pronounced the sentence of death.

"That on the morning of the following day, Private Santiago Moreno would be escorted to the plain of San Geronimo, and there be put to death by 'law of fire!'"

That was all. The prisoner drew himself up and saluted, his face no more concerned than that of the men about him, and was taken to his cell.

The soldiers melted away, group by group, some of them displaying sorrow, some unconcern, and others anger. For the slaying of his companion-in-arms by Private Moreno had been a very cold-blooded and more than usually wicked deed, even in a country where wicked deeds are not uncommon.

With deliberate intention, Moreno had waited for the other, after parting with his sweetheart, Panchita, and coolly and methodically bored a dagger straight to his heart. For this deed he had offered no excuse or defence, stating merely that the murdered soldier had "annoyed Panchita; that a caballero cannot allow such a thing as annoying his affianced bride."

In his small stone cell Private Moreno walked about, whistling a gay Mexican dance tune. He wanted pen, ink and paper, to write *adios* to his sweetheart, he stated lightly to the warder, who was eyeing him warily, one hand on his pistol. Though Moreno might not be armed, he was a man to be watched.

But at the prisoner's wish to write a note to Panchita, the warder's face relaxed, and he offered to find pencil and paper. For Panchita was his own cousin, and every one loved the gay, pretty girl, with her artless, innocent ways that had lured two men on to death.

Poor little Panchita!

Five minutes after the death sentence had been pronounced, she knew of it, her door locked, was lying face downward on the cold stone floor, moaning and crying.

It had all been her fault, as she knew—through her two men had come by their death.

After a time she stood up, tottering and moved over to the window.

There was no one in sight; the hot sunshine poured down on the yellow sandy street and the gray adobe walls.

Out in the middle of the road some dogs and small children rolled and tumbled in the dust together in high glee.

It was all so ordinary, so everyday; and yet Santiago was to be shot to-morrow.

That is, unless she could think of a plan to save him.

There was a sudden clatter, and the children scattered rapidly, with many duckings and bobbings of their small, fat bodies, as good Padre Francisco, on his pacing mare, turned the corner and went rapidly down the street. Behind him rode a boy on a heavy horse.

Panchita thought dully that some one at the *hacienda* of San Juan must be very ill and wanted the Padre for confession. It would be a long ride for the good old man, because San Juan was many miles away. He would be absent from the town for over a day.

Pulling at the strings of his soutane, Padre Francisco rode on, his old black cloak flapping in the breeze.

As the girl watched the retreating figure of the priest, with the well-known shabby attire, a thought struck her

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and she drew back from the window with a gasp. For now she knew what to do, and Santiago should be saved.

At six o'clock that evening the soldier on guard before Santiago's door admitted without question the thin, stooping form of Padre Francisco, cloaked and hooded in his usual manner, and carrying prayer-book and rosary. The good father was silently telling his beads, and the soldier bowed humbly as he opened the door, speaking no word. For no Catholic is thus privileged to address a priest who is counting his rosary beads—it is a sign that silence is desired.

The cell door opened and closed silently after the Padre, and the watch outside heard a smothered, impatient ejaculation from Private Moreno who was smoking a cigarette and trying hard to write that *adios* to Panchita. Then the door was locked, for the Padre was going to confess the prisoner, and the guards retired laughing at the idea of confession for Santiago—the wickedest dog in the army of Mexico.

Lounging in the doorway, the soldiers speculated lazily as to what was going on in the condemned cell, it was so quiet. Not even a murmur could be heard, and finally the men agreed that the Padre was praying silently.

It was dark—quite dark—when Padre Francisco came out, with head bowed lower than ever, cloak wrapped disconsolately about him, and fingers still telling his beads. He had been there for an hour, and surely Santiago was either talked down or dead by this time.

"Shall we go and see?" asked a guard.

"No, *hombre;* let the poor brute alone," said another.

To the men who watched all night for fear that the prisoner might escape, it seemed a century before midnight gave way to the darkness that comes before dawn, and there was a sound of relief when at last the first bugle sounded; it was time to get the prisoner and march. Because a soldier is allowed two privileges—to be executed before dawn, and to be shot in his uniform.

In front of the prison drawn up into line, in the darkness, stood the squad of the Twenty-third (Private Moreno's own regiment), who were to attend to the "law of fire," and in the corridor waited impatiently the two guards who were detailed to walk on either side of him

The prisoner, however, was not ready; and deep disgust and scorn were shown on every face when the warder appeared and stated grimly that the prisoner was weeping like a child, and had begged one moment's grace.

Weeping, indeed! A pretty way for a soldier of the Twenty-third to die! And men who had thought privately that they would aim low in the "law of fire," hardened their hearts—a coward did not deserve such treatment.

That the prisoner, barely visible in the grey dawn, was perfectly calm and composed when he did appear made no difference to them; perhaps he had mustered up some courage, after his weeping, but he had played the coward for all that, and a coward's death was no loss.

Out on the bare, swampy plain of San Geronimo, just where Mount Ajusco rises up, bleak and rock-covered, was the place of execution. The walk was not long for the men, to the sound of the muffled march, but very dreary. As for the condemned man, though he might have played the part of a coward in the prison, there was no sign of fear now, so far as they could see in the semi-darkness.

Here was the spot. And with his back to Ajusco, his feet sinking into the damp ground, and the grey mist of the morning resting like a pall about him, and the prisoner was allowed to stand for a moment, while the Captain made a brief address, concluding with the statement that only because the prisoner was a soldier, the "law of fire" would be put into effect; when the word *uno* was pronounced he was to run for his life. On the craggy side of Ajusco he might find shelter, perhaps.

Uno—dos—tres would be counted; at *tres* the squad would fire. Therefore he would have to hasten—otherwise, Heaven have mercy on him.

"*Attençion!*"

The soldiers stood on guard.

"*Uno!*" was counted slowly.

The prisoner stood stock still, and the man nearest swore that there was a smile on his face.

"*Dos!*"

Was he paralysed, that he could not run, even to save his life?

"*Tres!*"

Motionless, horrified, the men had watched. Still the prisoner stood there, head up and shoulders back. At the sound of the *tres*, however, muskets were lowered, and every hammer pulled.

Out thundered the salute of bullets, a veritable hail of them, and the solitary, pathetic figure tottered, then reeled over, face downward, in the damp grass. Dead, of course—how could it be otherwise?

The captain should have looked to make sure, but he wanted his breakfast and some cognac. Merely glancing casually at the body, he gave the order, and with the march once more ringing out, the men tramped back through the light of the coming day to the barracks and breakfast, leaving the dead man alone on the plain.

The next day Private Santiago Moreno himself, whom we have seen shot and left dead on the San Geronimo plain was there at sunset, pale, mad with grief, and holding in his arms a dead body in the uniform of a soldier, but with the sweet, peaceful face of a woman who had offered up her life for a friend.

When the sun went down, his lifeless form remained, still clasping—even in death—the other body that had been thought his.

R. PALMER.

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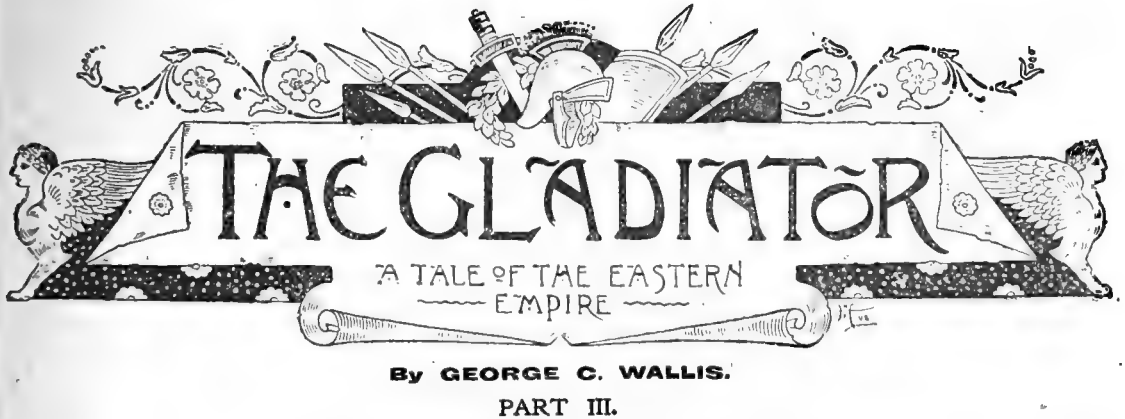

By GEORGE C. WALLIS.

PART III.

CHAPTER III.

The Meeting with Marcen.

News came in thick and fast when the army had been gone some weeks, of the gathering of the Goths and their allies, and their uniform success in all parts of the country. Province by province and city by city Totila wrested back the conquests that the master-hand had gained, and at last word was brought into camp by a scared-faced Hun that the enemy was concentrating his force upon Rome. Rhesus' first thought, seeing how many men he had lost by desertion, was to give up the post and fall back towards the capital, but it was fated otherwise.

The country round was still tolerably peaceful, though many were flying before the coming storm, but having been much annoyed by the guerilla warfare of a band of robbers from the near hills ever since the departure of the general, Rhesus determined to march out and teach them a salutary lesson before retreating.

His Huns and Greeks were eager for action and adventure, so they sailed forth in high spirits, and pursuing a straggler, came upon the main body of the robbers before the evening of the same day. These, although nearly equal in number, took to flight. Keeping well in front, knowing the country better, they led the soldiers a long way beyond their first desire. But Rhesus was hot on the scent and in no mood to be shaken off. He flung discretion to the winds and went on recklessly. The chase went on for days, the fugitives heading towards Florence, by the side of the highway; but midway there, at the foot of the huge rock plateau whereon the Etruscan ruins of Urbs Vetus gleamed in the sun, they were run down.

They dismounted at the base of the steep slope, under the shadow of the great, embrasured wall, and there to the astonishment of Rhesus, threw down their weapons and yielded. As he galloped to the front and demanded the reason, their leader stepped out from the ranks and confronted him. The face that he saw under the broad-brimmed helmet was the face of Marcen—Marcen, his enemy!

With a cry of rage Rhesus leant over in his saddle, upraising his sword to strike. The agony of the years of toil and infamy, of long-cherished revenge, came darkening into the sunlight of his careless mood, and but that Marcen stood weaponless, helpless and seemingly neither surprised nor afraid, he would have struck without mercy.

"It was not your wont, Rhesus," said the other sadly, "to kill in cold blood. Least of all a man at your mercy as I am. Though I grant that you have just provocation."

"Why should I not make an end of you now, villain?" cried Rhesus furiously.

"Because I have repented of my past wrong-doing, Rhesus. Because I would make what recompense I can. Because I have saved your life."

"What mean you?" Rhesus asked, incredulous. Then scornfully: "What new treachery have you afoot that you dare to put yourself in my clutches?"

"The treachery is past and gone, Rhesus. You will understand my meaning better when I tell you that these men are merely adventurers in my pay. I have employed them merely for the purpose of bringing you out of the circle of death. You would never have escaped of your own will. This chase was merely a stratagem, long planned, to lure you away from Rome while there was time."

"And why should I be kept from Rome?"

"To save your life, as I have said. Already the vanguard of Totilla's Army will have passed your out-post. The ends of his crescent array will have penned the city in. If you had not been killed in the seige, Rhesus, nor beheaded at the Gothic triumph, there are still prisons in Rome. Dead, or in the lower chamber of the dark Tullianum where Vercingetorix died and the accomplices of Cataline perished, how would you see Eutasia again? Those who have gone down those 'Steps of Sighs,' friend, have seldom returned."

"And what is that to you, traitor?" Rhesus was yet angry, half-believing, half-doubting.

"Much," said the other. "Though she vowed to wed me if I spared you from death at the trial of Nika, she denied me when I claimed the promise. She was so good and gentle, yet so firm in her refusal, that I could not press my power. I came instead to regret my folly and sin. I promised to seek you out and bring you back. By chance I heard your name mentioned by a sick soldier who came home in the first week of the war, and set sail at once. I was delayed by various causes on the way, and seeing, on arrival, how Totila was advancing, devised this plan to bring you out of the struggle. It has not been without risk to myself, Rhesus, as you know. Do you still doubt my good-will?"

"In truth, yes," answered Rhesus bitterly. "I cannot forget the past so easily as you wish, knave. You were ever plausible. What have you done with the secret treasure—if, indeed, you have obtained it?"

A strange expression, an anxious fear, and a subtle smile intermixed, nearly betrayed Marcen, but he recovered in time, and replied:

"That I have not the treasure none should know better than yourself, Rhesus, who have the secret. I have hope that if I help you to gain it and to win Eutasia and to keep you from the notice of the Empress, you will share it with me. I have suffered much for it already. Theodora suspected me of treachery when I reported that it could not be found. She swore to pull down the remains of the

burnt convent before she would be baulked. She even cast me into a dungeon because I refused to reveal its whereabouts. In the end, as I always meant, I feigned to give way, saying I had feared the vengeance of accomplices. I led her to the secret passage, to the great rock door—and of course we found the passage empty. She was mad with anger at first, but having had my house searched and my friends questioned to no purpose, let me go. Then it was that I sought Eutasia's hand secretly, faring as I have told. But you still doubt my word? Come with me."

The place was deserted, so bidding his men follow, Rhesus went with him up the steep rock and through the ruins, until they came to the great well of the fortress, near the old burial-ground of the past and gone Etruscans.

"Let me command my men a moment," said Marcen, "and I will prove my faith in you—and to you."

Wondering, beginning to believe, Rhesus consented. The other bade two of the men bind him to the cord that hung from the crude wallow and then lower him until his hands, at utmost stretch, could not reach the brink of the well. Then he spoke to the soldier.

"You have a sharp sword, Rhesus. You know how to use it. If you think I am still your foe, if you imagine that I am yet a traitor, strike at the taut cord with all your force and have your revenge! It is an easy thing to do, Rhesus; not dangerous to yourself at all. If I am indeed your enemy it will pay you well!"

"It is a coward's challenge!" cried Rhesus, relenting. "I cannot do it, though I cannot quite believe your honesty."

"Then strike!" came the voice from the well. "Strike hard and quick, so that it may be over! Surely you will never regret it!"

Rhesus said he believed him then, despite an undercurrent of suspicion, and sheathing his sword, bade the men draw Marcen out. Surely no common man, be he saint or sinner, would have so put himself in the power of one he had wronged unless his purpose was honest? He could not deny him after that!

"So you believe me at last?" he cried, when he came up, "You are hard to convince!"

His teeth chattered, his face was deathly pale.

"I must, and I suppose I must forego the revenge I have cherished through all these dark years," said Rhesus. "But it was a desperate hazard, man. My fingers itched on the sword-hilt! But you will find Rhesus the Roman as good a friend as he is a stern foe. I will go back with you to Constantinople now, since I cannot get to Rome, and if you will help me to gain Eutasia, why, one half the treasure is yours. That is, if we can come at it."

Marcen started, as with fright.

"If?" he repeated. "You speak in riddles. If you have not the key, you know its place. When I went down the passage after your trial I saw the writing on the rock."

Rhesus was surprised at this, and that he should talk so glibly of the key, when he ought not to know of its existence; but kept his countenance and said drily:

"If you tell me the words of the writing, I should have some proof of the truth of your story."

"It was but faintly scratched, and after I read it I chiselled it out, leaving no trace. It was simply '*The key is found.*'"

In spite of his self-control, Rhesus was visibly amazed at this, and Marcen seemed still more perplexed. But the former passed the matter off with a laugh at his own invincible scepticism, taking care not to mention it again afterwards.

"So!" he said. "If that is found, all is well. That it is in the capital is evident; where, you will find when we arrive—not till. Till then, we are friends and co-adventurers. Is it not so?"

"Nothing could be better," cried Marcen, well-pleased. "I am already finding the straight path of honesty more profitable than the way of deceit."

So they called the men together and put it to them whether they would go back to the east or remain and join the Goths, for mercenaries have no enduring loyalty or preference, save for the lightest pay—and some thought one way and some the other. In the end they rode away from Urbs Vetus with about a hundred sober fellows who had pleasant memories of home, and struck out for the coast. They met with no opposition, save from the villagers whose hoards they plundered for their daily needs, so thoroughly had Totila drained the country and massed his forces. Coming upon the Appian Way, they kept along it to Dyrrachium—from Rome, a full forty days' journey. There they got a small rowing vessel and put off with favourable weather; and to be brief, came without a mishap of a serious nature to the Golden Horn. They went ashore in the morning and sought out an unassuming inn to lodge at, and that being settled, parted until night.

Rhesus went out into the city as he had done the first time he landed. But this time he was alone. He was an outlaw walking amongst pitfalls and snares, albeit he was wearing the badge of blue instead of a band of green. He trod the familiar streets with an unfamiliar step; noting the familiar places. The new Church, the more numerous drinking-booths, the ruins of the convent where Proclus had fallen to save him, the silent arena, the deserted gladiatorial quarter—he marked them all; and as the past rushed over him, marvelled more and more at Marcen's repentance. The lingering doubt that his daring hazard had not quite dispelled took fresh hold of Rhesus. It grew in force, disquietening him with its persistency. He began to regret that he had not made an end of the traitor when he hung in the well.

Busy with these memories and thoughts, he ranged the city until nightfall. On his way back to the inn he came in sight of the spires and battlements of Theodora's palace by the shore of Propontis. He suddenly remembered how he had once ventured into the garden in search of Eutasia. He went cautiously down a narrow way by the side of it, and scaled the wall.

CHAPTER IV.

In the Garden—and the Chase.

The casements of the palace were luminous squares of light. The sound of many voices and soft laughter came floating to Rhesus through the groves as he dropped upon the ground and stole silently forward. He reached the shelter of a wide-branching aloe unperceived by the few courtiers and lackeys who strolled along the quiet walks. In the shade he crouched and waited, for what he scarcely knew. Some unexplained impulse had led him there; the same mysterious influence bade him stay and wait.

The love-makers mooned along in the gloaming, the guards made their rounds in easy confidence, all were oblivious of his presence. The air was wondrous still and pleasant, yet merry withal with the subdued murmur of thoughtless gaiety, the tingle and splash of fountains, the chirping of insects, the carillons of singing birds. The dusk deepened. In the pale sky shone some of the brighter stars. His vigil seemed purposeless. A little longer, and then that for which he waited came, and he had his reward.

She was one of a group of beautiful women, the fairest amongst them, who came laughing and talking low right under the shade of the tree behind which he was hidden. She stood so near to him that he could have touched her had he stretched his arm through the leafage, but he dared not. He listened to their idle chatter and feminine jests with ill patience, feasting his eyes the while on her beauty. A great longing, a maddening desire, arose within him. She was not a girl now, but a woman. A woman in every graceful curve of limb, and every flash of the sweet blue eyes. Older, truly, and with a shadow of sadness on her face that he had not seen before, but more

lovely, not less, therefore. There is an added age that is but added charm. In everything on earth that is beautiful is the tracery of grief.

Presently the gay group passed on, leaving him alone. Rhesus thought he must be going, but she came back, solitary, and stood near him again, gazing in silence at the palace. He longed to speak, to move, but even when she sighed he could not break the spell. And while he hesitated some one came swiftly up and the two fell to earnest talk The newcomer was a man.

Rhesus could not see his face at first, nor recognize his voice, though it was strangely familiar to his ears. He listened intently to their conversation. It related, queerly enough, to himself. Yet that caused him no amaze compared with what he felt when the man turned, showing his features, and Eutasia pronounced his name.

"You are late in coming, friend," said she. "You have not yet told me what you discovered in your last search."

"Something of greater import has delayed me," said the man. "Something that makes it needless to tell you how I fared in the search. Cannot you think, Eutasia?"

"Have you learnt where Rhesus is?" she cried excitedly.

"Better than that, in one way; yet perchance worse in another. Rhesus is here, in this city. He landed this morning, in company with Marcen."

"And where is he now?" asked Eutasia. "where is he now, Proclus? Why don't you bring him here to me—or take me to him?"

"Because I cannot trace him far after the landing," said Proclus. That moment he turned his head so that Rhesus saw the profile of his face.

It was Proclus in very truth—Proclus, whom he had deemed dead those many years—Proclus, his cynical friend—Proclus, who had been left in the black Hall of Waters, under the falling walls of the blazing convent—Proclus in the flesh, strong, well, undeniable!

Rhesus forgot his caution. He gave a cry of wonder, missed his footing, slipped through the veil of leaves, and went stumbling before them. Eutasia stifled a shriek when she saw him, then ran into his outstretched arms with a sob of sudden joy. Proclus stole some distance away.

Rhesus pressed the dear form close. He showered the hoarded caresses of many hopeless days upon the sweet red lips. He looked into her tear-filled eyes and read there the charter of his full possession. The flattery of the Court, the favours of the Empress, the persecutions of Marcen, the fear that Rhesus was lost to her for ever, had not once impaired her affection. She was his now, his wholly, as she had been that far back day when first he kissed her saucy lips.

"The time is going, Rhesus," she said at last. "We must be careful here, and we have much to say. Come closer to the shade of the tree, and tell me how you have fared this long, weary time."

"It is a long story," said Rhesus. "I must be brief in my telling, but this is the pith of it."

And clasping her waist in the shadow he told her his adventures as well as he could. She wept for his miseries and laughed at his boldnesses, and smiled at his good-fortune until he came to the end. But when he spoke of Marcen her eyes lit up with an angry fire.

"You need say little more of him," she cried. "There lives no meaner, no cleverer, no more unscrupulous rogue! I believed in him long, deceived by his cunning words and ways. I sent you away from this very place with a sore heart because of him. For your sake I promised to become his wife, thinking him a friend. But I overheard him talking with the Empress one day not long after your exile, and I knew then how I was deceived, how I had wronged you. I refused to marry him, and when he threatened me with his revenge, I went to Theodora. She had some misgivings also, and sent him to the dungeons because he would not divulge the secret of the treasure, of which Proclus has told me. He was liberated shortly, however, and has persecuted me often, since, venturing as high in the palace circles as he dared after his debasement. A year ago he went away—it seems to get you in his clutches and wrest from you the key he believes you to possess."

"I see it all now!" cried Rhesus. "The consummate wretch! I see it all now. It was Proclus who wrote on the wall *"The key is found."* Proclus has the key now!"

"That he has, friend," said the cynic, coming rapidly towards them, "though you thought him stabbed to death and then drowned! The gods, you see, are loth to let those die who find no joy in living!"

"You are bitter as of yore against the Fates," said Rhesus. "But how came you to escape? It passes my comprehension. I surely saw you killed."

"Not surely, eh? It is very simple. That fellow's knife went into me, 'tis true, but it missed a vital part. As for the water, I am a good swimmer. When you had gone I crawled up the steps, and when the ruins had cooled down somewhat, got out into the city and found friends. Being thus to all good purpose dead to the world, I took a fresh name and became a courtier. Eutasia alone knew me again in the disguise I have since worn, and for her sake as well as my own I have sought you far and wide. I heard but this noon of your arrival in the city, and here, indeed, you are!

"But if I mistake not, we have yet a hard task before us. We must act quickly and strike ruthlessly if we are to circumvent this Marcen once and for all and get away with Eutasia and the treasure. For I take it, Rhesus, that you have done with your ambitions—that you will be glad to be back in fair Sicily, where society, if not so learned and besotted, is at least less rotten!"

"It is a cruel thrust, friend risen from the dead!" said Rhesus, "but I grant you the victory. I have done with this accursed city and all its people—save you two. But what is it? Why look so strangely at each other?"

"Tell him, Proclus," said Eutasia, averting her face. "I cannot."

"It is hard to say, friend," said Proclus, "but such things must come to all of us, I opine, and are best met and faced at once. In my journeyings in search of you I went to Sicily; to your home. The house was silent. The farmlands were untilled save a little patch round the herd's cottage. Your father was dead, Rhesus; buried beside your mother. Only the old servitors who tended the home lands and the flocks remained, strong in the faith that you would return. I left gold to ward off the avaricious offers of your neighbours, telling them that you would surely come back. I came away, leaving them well content. So you cannot go too soon."

The blow was heavy, and more so because unexpected. Rhesus stood awhile silent, looking away from his friends. Then he took Eutasia's hand and his eyes sought hers.

"It seems my home is waiting for me," he said, keeping back the tears. "Will you come and share it with me, dear, and leave this gay life? If we cannot give you equal wealth and flattery, our sunny land can give you peace and plenty, and smiling goodwill. Say, dear, shall we go together. . . .?"

She clasped his hand tightly, and raised it to her lips with a tenderness he had seen in no other woman, and that was new even to her, and said:

"Why ask me, Rhesus? Where would not I go with you?"

That was enough, and he turned to Proclus.

"And you, too, friend? Will you not come with us? The strain of your satire will temper our foolish young joy, perchance!"

"Perchance," answered he. "We shall see. But we must be going now. To-morrow we will arrange our plans."

"Till to-morrow, then," they said. Eutasia sped away down the garden path in the dim night glimmer like a fleeing shadow. The friends made for the portal in the wall, where the cynic's name got them through.

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No one was in sight in the narrow way as they emerged from the darkness of the arching stone, so they stood in converse awhile. Rhesus asked his friend two questions that had been on his lips a dozen times.

"Why did you not get the treasure for yourself when I was gone and you had the key," he said. "And where did you find that?"

"It was the first thing that my hands touched when I crept out of the water. You must have dropped it and trailed it along the ground with your foot as they took you away. It was red with blood. As to the other matter—why, Rhesus, for all my city veneer, I trust that I make a true friend. And I have given up the idea of securing it all. As much as we two can carry away in one journey will enrich us for life. Then we can throw the key away and let him get the rest who can."

"You are right," said the other. "I care not for too much, so that we get safely away. Why not go to-morrow?"

"It is not possible," said Proclus quickly. "If I go with you I have matters to arrange that cannot be settled until the day beyond. But on second thoughts, Rhesus, in case we should not see each other until late, these are my plans. In my name and character I have good influence and ample opportunity. A well-fitted galley, swift, and manned by a crew of stout fellows bribed to secrecy, will be waiting for us at the foot of the palace steps, where the imperial ship lay ready on the night of Nika. We must not fail in meeting there. You must go back to Marcen now, keeping up pretence of friendship and putting him off with various pretexts. But what noise was that? There is something moving in the shadow yonder! Quick, Rhesus, with your javelin; you used to be a good thrower."

The short shaft left his friend's hand as he spoke. It sang in a bright curve towards the moving form. The form leapt sideways into the semi-light, and the dart fell harmlessly. Then, as the friends unsheathed their swords, a dozen figures started into life along the wall. More barred the outlet of the way, and a group sprang up behind.

As they closed, with drawn weapons, Rhesus recognised in the face of one the passion-distorted visage of Marcen. The friends were caught in a trap.

As the hired accomplices of Marcen closed upon them—they were gladiators, hungry for all and any sort of work now the arena was closed—Rhesus felt the wild frenzy of deferred revenge leap up strong within him. He was fighting against the wall, for life and all that made life dear; and before him was the man whose cunning had been his ruin and whose fate he had had in his hands three times already and yet foolishly spared. He was roused.

"This time," he said to Proclus, as they hewed at the foe in unison, "the traitor shall not escape!"

Though outnumbered ten to one, they resisted stubbornly, and after the first rush, the ardour of the assassins cooled somewhat. Marcen drew them off, and tried to make terms. Rhesus would not have listened, but Proclus said why not rest awhile, and had his way.

"I thought you a man of your word, Rhesus," said Marcen. "When in fairness you promised me one half, I thought you meant it. But I deem it best to make sure of any man, so I followed you here. Growing suspicious, I made bold to learn your business with this fellow whom I thought we had done with long ago. I have heard your pretty scheme in detail. It was well that I came prepared for all emergencies. But to save further killing and unseemly riot, and to avoid the attention of the city guards I will make you a peaceable offer. I will give you one third of the treasure if you will put down your blades, come with me, and unlock the door."

Rhesus laughed disdainfully, telling him to make such terms with a coward or a fool.

"You are in my power," he replied sullenly.

"This is truly an amusing affair!" cried Proclus. "Here we are in his power, and he cringes to us for a secret! Come, let us be going home!"

"If I betray you to Theodora—what then?"

"Why, you would not be long after me to the galleys or the gibbet, man," laughed the cynic. "But make way there, we are in haste!"

The mention of the galleys stirred up an evil memory in Rhesus, and together the friends dashed forward at the ruck, Rhesus making the traitor his mark. The blow caught him, but their attack was so sudden that he could not stay to make sure. The gladiators were taken by surprise, and hurling three to the ground, the friends got through and tore down the street, the others following in hot pursuit.

It was almost too dark to see their way. The dogs that snarled over the offal in the gutters came near tripping them often. But they both knew the city well, and down this alley and that, across this square and through that deserted arcade, they dodged and ran. Their lives hung on their speed, yet those behind dogged them stubbornly, and gradually gained. Rhesus found that he had lost the staying power of his younger days. The rowing hold had done its evil work too well. At last, in the middle of the long street before the great church, he began to flag, and bade Proclus go on.

"Save yourself!" he said. "I can run no farther."

"But you must come some way," cried Proclus. And he lifted the other to his shoulder with a strong effort. Sundry arrows flew past as he ran on again thus burdened, and the pursuers quickly drew up. This was not to Rhesus' liking, and he felt relieved when he heard the rumble of a chariot and Proclus set him down. The latter had almost run into the tardily-moving vehicle. They were not slow in taking advantage of its opportune appearance. A bishop, going home late from some synod or other drunken feast, sat alone in it, asleep. His charioteer had evidently left him to his own devices. His plump hands were locked on his fat paunch, his head thrown forward, his chin half buried in the wine-sodden folds of his costly robe. They had neither pity nor respect for him, and while Proclus held the horses, Rhesus roughly bundled the pious sot into the road. They sprang in and seized the reins; and as the pursuers came panting up, cracked the lash and shot away.

The startled steeds, cheated of their quiet amble, dashed forward furiously, and so, shouting defiance to the baffled foe, the friends tore on, rattling and plunging, through the dim and peaceful streets. Some of the folk, ever fearful, threw open their lattices and shrieked for the soldiery, others ran after them a little way, and once a group of night watchmen, emerging, reeling, from the friendly shelter of an illicit inn, tried to stop them. But they still held on madly. They heard behind a rolling rattle that was not the echo of their own swift-turning wheels, and knew that Marcen had found a friend in need and was not yet shaken off.

"We shall get out here—I know the place well," said Proclus, as he pulled up before a great, grim house. "I have long had this ready for emergencies."

Rhesus followed him, and left the chariot standing empty by the doorstone. As Marcen's car rolled into view, they lifted the latch and passed into the house, bolting the door on the inside. Passing through many rooms and long passages and strong doorways, they came to a stable facing the street beyond. Here a horse stood harnessed, with a light car bright and greased, and an attendant ready attired. A few seconds and they were in, and off again, flying swiftly and softly, like the wind. This time they were unpursued, they thought, and threading their way through many obscure alleys, made for the ruined convent of St. Conan, under which lay the gold so coveted, so hard to obtain.

(To be concluded.)

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RAPID METHOD
OF BANISHING
SUPERABUNDANT FAT.

Astounding Success in the Treatment of Obesity.

GOOD NEWS FOR STOUT PERSONS.

Our corpulent readers will be glad to learn how to positively lose two stone in about a month, with the greatest posible benefit in health, strength, and muscle, by a comparatively new system. It is a singular paradox that the patient, returning quickly to a healthy state, with increased activity of brain, digestive and other organs, naturally requires more food than hitherto; yet, notwithstanding this, he absolutely loses in weight 1lb. or 2lb. daily, as the weighing machine will prove. Thus there is no suggestion of starvation. It is an undoubted success; and the author, who has devoted years of study to the subject, guarantees a noticeable reduction within twenty-four hours of commencing the treatment. This is different with other diseases, for the patient in some cases may go for weeks without being able to test whether the physician has rightly treated him, and may have derived no real or apparent improvement in health. Here, we repeat, the author guarantees it in twenty-four hours, the scale to be the unerring recorder. The treatment aims at the actual root of obesity, so that the superfluous fat does not return when discontinuing the treatment. It is perfectly harmless. We advise our readers to call the attention of stout friends to this, because, sincerely, we think they ought to know. For their information we may say that on sending three penny stamps a book, entitled "Corpulency, and the Cure" (256 pages), containing a reprint of Press notices from some hundreds of medical and other journals—British and foreign—and other interesting particulars, including the "recipe," can be had, post free, from a Mr. F. C. Russell, Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.

The following are extracts from other journals:

MARVELLOUS RESULTS IN CURING CORPULENCY.

We find a writer in a recent issue of that excellent publication the *Penny Illustrated Paper*, says: "The corpulent will be glad to learn how to lose two stone in about a month, with benefit to health, strength, and muscle, by a comparatively new system. It is a singular fact that the patient returning quickly to a healthy state, with increased activity of brain, digestive organs and other organs, naturally requires more food than hitherto; yet, notwithstanding this, he absolutely loses in weight one or two pounds daily, as the weighing-machine will prove. The book, 'Corpulency, and the Cure' (256 pages), containing the 'recipe' can be had gratis from Mr. F. C. Russell, Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C., by sending cost of postage, threepence."

We had the curiosity to send to this specialist, and found to our surprise that he had discovered a simple herbal remedy most pleasant to the taste, which entirely disposed of the necessity of starving one's self if he wished to be rid of all superfluous matter. An interesting point, which goes to prove that the almost magical compound is beyond doubt harmless, is that in prescribing it in a tentative way to lean persons, or rather to those who carry no superfluity of fat beyond that which is required as fuel for Nature's furnace, the medicine is absolutely inoperative, attacking only that unhealthy disease-creating waste accumulation which is the burden of the fat creature's existence. In many cases where people take decoctions, reputed to be new medical discoveries, to cure some specific disease, they may recover by the action of the medicine, or Nature may have effected her own cure. In the case of corpulency, if a simple remedy undertakes to reduce a person, say 7lb. in a week, all that one has to do is to get weighed, and thus prove it conclusively. So it is with Mr. Russell's compound, but he asks you to prove it in twenty-four hours only.—*Rochdale Star.*

TWO POUNDS OF FAT REMOVED IN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS.

A Mr. Russell, author and specialist in obesity, has experimentally tried the effect of administering large doses to moderately lean persons of his well-known herbal discovery, which is so marvellously effectual in reducing superfluous fat, with the result that there is not the slightest alteration or diminution of weight recorded, thereby proving conclusively to our minds that it is only the unhealthy adipose waste tissue which is destroyed, for after dispersing a few fluid ounces of his remarkable vegetable compounds he succeeds in destroying the diseased fatty mass at the rate of from 2lb. to even 12lb. in seven days. There can be no ambiguity about it, for any person can test this for themselves by standing upon a weighing-machine. He explains that all lean persons carry a certain amount of fat necessary for the natural production of heat in the body; but Nature has only stored up her requisite stock in the healthy system, which she most zealously guards, and thus declines to part with an ounce to the persuasions of Mr. Russell's vegetable tonic, however immoderate the dose may be, which testifies abundantly to to the fact that it is only a chemical solvent of insalubrious adipose tissue. There is no doubt that the inventor of the composition must have possessed a profound vegetable knowledge in selecting this simple but peculiar combination.

Those who resort to the pernicious products of the mineral kingdom, or even the deleterious sections of the vegetable world, doubtless can decoct something powerful, but injurious in its action; such, however, require no laudatory commendation. But Mr. Russell (we herewith append his address: Woburn House, 27 Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C., the author of "Corpulency, and the Cure," 256 pages, price threepence, stamps, post free), makes no secret of the simplicity of his treatment, and avers that the decoction can be drunk as a refreshing summer drink, pleasant to the palate, yet having sufficient effect, although perfectly harmless, to remove generally 2lb. or more in twenty-four hours. We think stout persons would do well to send for this book, which can be obtained at the address given above.—*Leeds Times*

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SHORT TRUTHS.

O. P. T.—Stout officers are unknown in the United States army, for the simple reason that no man weighing over one hundred and sixty pounds can join a cavalry regiment, while officers in the general service are likely to be retired for obesity.

T. C. has the misfortune to be cross-eyed, and wants me to tell him of a remedy.———If the squint is at all pronounced, I'm afraid there is nothing for it but the usual operation for squint. As he tells me he has worn glasses for two years, under medical advice, without effect, I am afraid nothing but this would meet his case. He had better consult his doctor as to the expediency of going to an eye hospital.

N. T.—No two birds fly in exactly the same manner. The style of their flight depends upon the texture and form of their wings, feathers, and tail.

W. A. D.—Yes, sardines are becoming alarmingly scarce, and this circumstance is most calamitous to the fishing population on the coast of the Bay of Biscay. It is supposed that the waters of the Bay have become colder, and that the sardines have, in consequence, migrated elsewhere. A very large proportion of the fish sold as sardines are, in reality, Cornish pilchards.

T. M.—All Ambassadors have the same rights and privileges at the Courts to which they are accredited, and precedence only follows the notified priority of arrival.

H. W. asks: "How is opium obtained from the poppy?"———By cutting the capsule of the flower with a notched iron instrument at sunrise. The next morning a drop or so of juice will have oozed out. It takes a great many poppies, however, to make a pound of opium, and it goes through a number of processes before it is ready for the market. In its liquid state it looks like dark strawberry jam.

R. D. S.—A locust is rather a dainty morsel to eat, especially the female, which tastes of green wheat. Both sexes are edible when fried in butter, or salted, or sun-dried, or "plain boiled." In parts of Beluchistan, they are munched raw.

Smythe asks: "Is it absolutely compulsory for every Britain to have a Christian name?"———Certainly not. There is no law to that effect. So long as Society is constituted as it is at present, however, you may be sure that human beings will be known by Christian names, whether they are bestowed upon them in the ordinary manner or not.

I am so often asked by my readers to tell them of a cure for stammering, that I am sure the following simple cure which has recently come under my notice will be of interest to many: The sufferer must fill his lungs by a strong inhalation before beginning to speak. This simple plan will often cure the most obstinate of cases.

K.—The Russian sceptre is of solid gold. It is three feet long, and among the precious stones with which it is studded are 268 diamonds.

C. P. T.—On the whole, asphalte paving wears better and lasts longer than either macadam or wood. It has been found that on a busy street macadam will wear at the rate of from five to six inches a year, while asphalte wears only one-fifth of an inch. Wood pavement will wear from five to six years in a busy street, and twice this length of time in less-frequented streets, while fifteen years on a granite road will not wear it more than two inches.

Ostler.—It is a mistake to suppose that a trotting horse has always one foot on the ground. Instantaneous photography has proved that a horse at full trot has all four feet in the air at certain points of its progress.

W.—Many people in this country believe that the kind of summer we shall have is forecasted by the weather on March 21st, and the winter by that of September 21st. In other words, those two days are miniatures of the summer and winter respectively. In Central and Eastern Switzerland the peasants pin their faith to "Gallus-Tag"—the festival day of their British apostle, St. Gall, October 16th. "As it is on St. Gall's Day, so it will be through the winter." "A dry Gallus-Tag foretells a dry summer next year." Those are two of the many sayings of the peasantry concerning the great day.

P. P.—The words put in italics in the Bible have been added by the translators in order to make clearer the meaning of the passages in which they occur.

"Do members of the Royal Family pay rates and taxes?" is the question put by Democrat.———Sometimes. It all depends. All their property which belongs directly to the Crown is exempt from taxation of any kind. For instance, all the royal estates and those lent by Her Majesty to her children are free; but they must pay for their private property in the same way as other people have to do.

Amateur—The green-room of a theatre was so-called because it was originally painted or decorated with green to relieve the eyes of the actors from the glare of the footlights.

D. H. W.—It takes three minutes for all the blood in the body to pass through the heart.

R. M.—The income of the Czar is two and a half millions a year.

Messenger.—The best carrier pigeon is the Antwerp or Belgian Voyageur, which can fly five hundred miles in twelve hours, if the weather be fine. One hundred miles is considered a long flight for London carriers; but the foreign flying matches are usually over distances varying between two hundred and five hundred miles.

"How is it that gold retains its colour when other metals tarnish?" is the question put by Roberts.———Because gold is not acted upon by oxygen or water. It is the moisture in the air which causes other metals to tarnish. Water contains a large amount of oxygen, as you know, and it is the oxygen in the moist air combining with the surface of the metals that covers them with tarnish. Pure platinum is another untarnishable metal.

R. H. J.—In our Parliament the length of speeches may be limited, but not arbitrarily. The Speaker can exercise a right of closure if he deems fit when a question under discussion has, to his mind and to that of the rest of the House, been sufficiently debated. This, however, is a special rule, and only occasionally enforced.

Mabel.—The "peculiar little shuffle" to which you refer as being characteristic of the gait of a Japanese girl is not due to the high wooden clogs she wears, but to the curious sort of bandage which compresses the lower part of the body and the hips, thus making the legs only really moveable from the knee downward.

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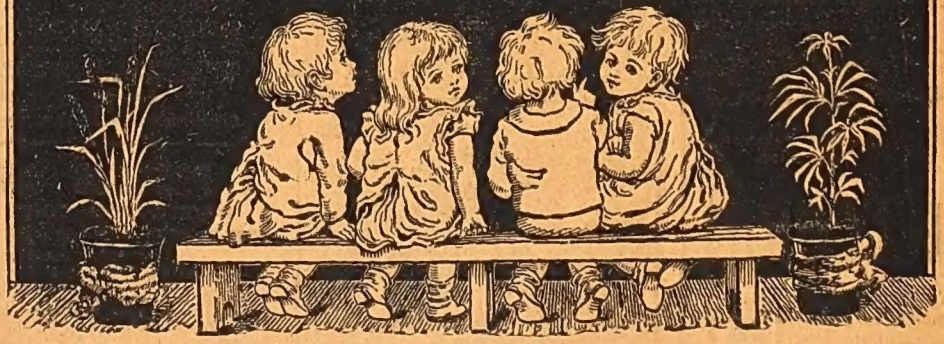

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